





# THE WAGNERIAN DRAMA

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

---

THE FOUNDATIONS OF  
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

---

IMMANUEL KANT  
A STUDY AND A COMPARISON WITH  
GOETHE, LEONARDO DA VINCI,  
BRUNO, PLATO AND DESCARTES

# THE WAGNERIAN DRAMA

AN ATTEMPT TO  
INSPIRE A BETTER  
APPRECIATION OF  
WAGNER AS A  
DRAMATIC POET. BY  
H. S. CHAMBERLAIN



LONDON: JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD LTD.

*First Published in 1923*

Made and Printed in Great Britain at  
*The Mayflower Press, Plymouth.* William Brendon & Son, Ltd.

## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE object of this little work is at the same time definite and circumscribed.

Wagner was throughout, from his childhood days in fact, a dramatic poet: to awaken in the reader's mind a real and intelligent recognition of this fact is the object of the following, for this recognition is the first and essentially important step towards the understanding of Wagner as an artist and the true comprehension of his artistic achievements.

To deprecate Wagner the Musician in favour of Wagner the Word-Poet would, to be sure, be more than attempting a paradox; but what must be understood is that the musical invention is in his case controlled by the poetical creation. As Wagner has himself explained, Music is the "feminine element," and as such, though not of lesser significance, it is none the less subservient to the masculine

element. How this is to be understood, it is the intention of the author to demonstrate.

Nowhere is the strict unity of purpose, which so singularly serves to render lucid and complete the general aspect of Wagner's life, more compellingly evident than in his art-works. If we leave out of our consideration a few superficial accidents, they will indeed appear to us as a single sequence. To prove this fact is the first step to be taken, after which we shall proceed to a consideration of the individual works in the light of this realisation. This consideration will, however, be confined to the dramatic kernel as well to the clear recognition of the fact, that in the new drama the conception of the dramatic factor is also a new one.

We shall see that Wagner took as his starting-point the drama, and that he never had any other object but the drama in view, that he only made use of Opera because he needed a musical and scenic apparatus for the realisation of his dramatic intentions and thought, for a time at least, that Opera would afford him this, and finally, that the development of his own intuitive creation at last

brought him the realisation that the point at issue was an entirely new art and with it the revelation of its fundamental principles. A consideration of these fundamental principles will conclusively prove that this achievement signifies not a reform, but a new-birth, that is to say, that the works of the first not fully conscious period can only be properly appreciated from the vantage-point of the period when consciousness was attained, as they form but rungs in the ladder reaching to consciousness of that which was already, though unconsciously, existing.

After this I shall shortly consider the works of the first period and show that they are dramas, but that their appreciation as such is impeded, partly through their operatic form, partly through certain deviations in the application of the various means of expression. For the works of the period of fully conscious creation in a new form of art a more detailed consideration will be necessary ; but here also I shall concentrate my attention only on the dramatic poet, and shall attempt to prove that Wagner with his new art-works was able and forced to wander in new paths, and that he

thereby revealed a hitherto undreamt-of world to the poetic art—a world in which, as he himself says, “there will be eternal scope for new invention.”

On the other hand, every form of technical treatise will be excluded. The fact that Wagner has enriched our medium of expression in a musical as well as in a poetical sense is not the essential point ; that is sufficiently proved by the fact that his inventions in the domains of harmony, instrumentation and diction have already become common property, whereas the art for the service of which he devised these innovations, has up to the present remained uncomprehended and without influence.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	v
I. HISTORICAL . . . . .	I
II. THE TEACHING OF THE WORD-TONE- DRAMA . . . . .	21
III. THE DRAMAS OF THE PERIOD BEFORE 1848 . . . . .	46
IV. THE DRAMAS AFTER 1848 . . . . .	85



# THE WAGNERIAN DRAMA



# THE WAGNERIAN DRAMA

## I

### HISTORICAL

“ As man and artist I am advancing towards a new world.”—RICHARD WAGNER.

THE first and most essential point to be realised is, that Wagner from the very beginning was first and foremost a dramatic poet ; the second is, that his dramatic gift was manifested from the outset in a special and individual creative impulse in which words and music played an equal part.

As a child, of the various subjects in which he was instructed, it was the poetical art which aroused in him the greatest enthusiasm, and especially epic and dramatic poetry ; and when he was about fifteen years of age he worked for two whole years on a tragedy of

quite monumental proportions. This fact is significant in the extreme. We see that in him poetical inspiration, even at the age of adolescence, called for the definite form of words and the controlling co-operation of the eye. That is to say, that we have to deal with a seer, in other words, a poet, in contradistinction to the merely musically gifted individual whose world of conceptions may be, and even in the case of musicians of genius often is, an entirely nebulous one. But his tragedy finished, the youthful poet decided on putting it to music ; he felt that without the co-operation of music he would be unable to realise fully his dramatic intention. A poetical-dramatic idea is, then, the foundation of this production ; this idea calls for the tangible form which it can only acquire through the understanding and the visual organ, that is, it calls for words and an actual representation on the stage ; but its emotional content is such, that, in order to manifest itself according to the intentions of the poet, it requires the co-operation of music. And when Wagner tells us, "I had not the slightest misgiving about my being able to compose myself this so

essential music" (I, 9),<sup>1</sup> we inevitably recognise that one entirely inexperienced in music could only have derived this confidence from the feeling of the necessity and unavoidability of the music.

Thus already in this virgin effort we have the whole Wagner before us: his natural bent and his talent stand out clearly. We do not find Wagner beginning life with the endowments of a musical infant-prodigy; it is rather at the bidding of poetry that his talent for music is awoken. His poem is by no means conceived as the text-basis on which to construct a tone-picture, but as a tragedy declaimed, and it is only after its completion that the poet realises that his poetical intention calls unavoidably for the co-operation of music and that, at the same time, his poem lends itself to a musical setting.

This very special sort of poetical endowment is a gift of the gods which Wagner brought

<sup>1</sup> Quotations which are not especially designated refer without exception to Richard Wagner's collected writings and poetical works, edited by E. W. Fritzsch, in Leipzig. The numbers at the side refer to the large standard edition. Owners of the small edition can also easily refer to their numbers by making use of the reference table.

with him into the world : he is at the same time poet and musician.

If, however, we wish to go below the surface of the matter and desire to obtain an insight into the essence of this talent, we should fiot rest before we have realised that he is not a poet and at the same time a musician as well, just as if in him two exceptional talents had been combined by some freak of nature, but that in the profoundest and most secret depths of this very impulse to create the yearning for music has its root, and that the music which then emanates from the poem—just as scent emanates from the leaves and buds of a tree—is in very truth the quickening, though invisible, sap of the tree. We shall soon refer to this point in detail ; but it cannot be too often repeated, for here we have the key which will help us to penetrate into the peculiar nature of this poet.

Very significant also is Wagner's second poetical attempt, likewise of a dramatic nature. Inspired simultaneously by Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* and by Goethe's "*Die Laune des Verliebten*," he composed a pastoral play about which he recounts : " In this case I

made no poetical concept whatever, composing the verses and music simultaneously, and in this way let the situations evolve of themselves out of the composition of music and verse." (IV, 312.)

It suffices for the moment to be able to find the indubitable proofs of this natural endowment in the two first productions of his childhood-days. These proofs are all the more valuable, as we soon afterwards come to a period of misconceptions.

It would be the duty of a biography to show by what chain of circumstances Richard Wagner became bandmaster and operatic composer a few years after writing his first tragedy. But it is sufficient for our present purpose to point out that the misapprehensions, which to this day act as a formidable barrier to all intelligent and rightful understanding of the works of the great word-tone-poet, can be traced for the most part to the exterior events of this period of scarcely fifteen years. The period in question is that of 1834 to 1849. This so comparatively brief period of life,—the transition to maturity, the period of "Storm and Stress,"—has stamped

Wagner in the eyes of the world, once and for all, as a professional musician and composer of operas. The fact that during the entire second period of his life, in spite of all the deprivations of exile, he never again became a conductor of orchestras nor undertook to write an opera, and that he even allowed his great works to be conducted by others after having himself superintended their preparation,—that fact is simply overlooked. And yet, if we are to base our judgment on exterior events, it were well at least to be consistent.

The following fact serves above all to justify this erroneous point of view, namely, that Wagner himself during this period of transition was labouring under a self-deception. He wished to write for the operatic stage, and actually believed his works to be "Operas" in the general acceptation of the term. But this was not the case. For his own development this delusion was of comparatively slight importance, for with every new work that he composed he made a mighty stride forwards towards obtaining an insight into his own nature and the conception of the new drama, which it was his destiny to reveal to

the world. It was just in and through these works that he gained clearness and was able to dispel the delusion. But if we, too, desire to arrive at a clear conception of Wagner's great art-works of the latter period, it is necessary above all that we should also free ourselves of the delusion that Wagner's works of the early period are merely operas. The significant feature of these early works consists in the fact that only their exterior shape adheres to operatic form, whereas the poet's genius—even in the very first work—attempts to force, and actually does force, a substance into this form which it is not able to contain. These works represent the first steps towards the discovery of the perfect form of the new Word-Tone-Drama.

Since I am here combating the obstinate superficiality, which with a mere word, a simple definition, pretends to pronounce a judgment, I am personally far from attaching too great value to a name. Does anyone insist on terming these works operas, I do not intend to quarrel with him; as a matter of fact, as far as their exterior form is concerned, they are operas, and Wagner himself almost always

designated them as such. But if I prefer to call them dramas instead of operas, it is merely in order to direct the reader's attention to their real kernel and to facilitate a true insight into their nature.

From 1833 to 1848 the first eight works were composed, notably in pairs and in intervals of about five years, namely : "The Fairies" and "Das Liebesverbot," "Rienzi" and "The Flying Dutchman," "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin," "Siegfried's Death" and "Frederick the Redbeard."

Every attentive observer will have been struck by this pairing off of the works, and when a closer consideration has shown him that in each of these groups of two one work is in one sense opposed to the other, and that in another sense either serves to complement the other, he will have gained the conviction that this phenomenon is not merely accidental. He will find a further corroboration of this when he turns to the sketches for works which were not carried out. For he will then discover that the opposition referred to, which already manifested itself clearly in the first pair, "The Fairies" and "Das Liebesverbot," culminates

in the last pair, "Siegfried's Death" and "Frederick the Redbeard" (both dating from the year 1848), in the direct juxtaposition of a musical work and a spoken drama.

This appearing in pairs of works which stand in such strong contrast to each other that one might well hesitate to ascribe them to the same author, forces itself on our attention like some sublime riddle. We instinctively feel that there must be some deeper reason for this phenomenon, and in doing so we are right.

If I inform the reader that it is here more or less question of a conflict between the poet and the musician, or, to be more accurate, between the Word-Poet and the Tone-Poet, I shall have indicated the right direction for finding a solution of this enigma. That this assertion is not entirely above discussion, I do not deny, but as a general indication for the present it will prove useful.

We see then Wagner during the period up to 1848 conceiving and, for the greater part, carrying out an imposing number of works. We shall soon recognise that all these works were the emanations of a purely dramatic

inspiration, and consequently form a single chain with the works of the latter period. They are, however, marked by two characteristic features which distinguish them from the others : exteriorly their form is defined by making use of the existing operatic form ; to be sure, in their substance they call for that completely exhaustive form of expression which can only be obtained through the union of poetry and music, but as the secret of their intimate fusion has not yet been discovered, certain deviations in the application of the mediums of expression occur and we have given us a series of works in which the relation of poetry to music traverses the most various stages, from the pure music-drama " *Rienzi* " to the merely spoken drama " *Frederick the Redbeard*." The superficial accidents of their creation are of too slight moment to arrest our attention for the present, and a true appreciation of the significance of these works can only be acquired in due course ; we will therefore go straight on and see what occurred in the year 1848.

Wagner's fundamental dramatic ideas require the co-operation of poetry and music.

But how are these two languages to be fused with complete harmony and into one single expression and, moreover, in such wise that neither one nor the other is depreciated, but that, on the contrary, each can develop its individuality more untrammelled than ever? That was the problem to be solved.

Up to 1848 Wagner looked for the solution where at a first glance it would seem to be found, namely, in a "how?" i.e. "How can Word and Tone work together towards the realisation of a supreme and exhaustive dramatic expression?" That they were able to do so, he did not doubt. Furthermore, he had not put himself to solve any theoretical questions, but rather attempted to solve this problem in the working out of his own conceptions. Each and every dramatic idea which aroused his interest was a welcome experiment; but for a stage representation the fusion of word and tone always appeared incompatible; for it was only their joint co-operation which satisfied his dramatic sense. But with every new work the question "how?" again presented itself.

In quite a similar manner Gluck had con-

sidered this question ; he sought to find the answer in a conscientious union of tone and word ; the result was only a reformation of opera, not the birth of a true drama. In certain parts of his splendid operas Mozart had actually solved the problem, but unconsciously and without himself or others having become aware of the fundamental significance of his innovations. Wagner followed the same path as Mozart inasmuch as at the outset he often unconsciously hit on the solution ; in other words, he went the way of true artistic genius. But this success could not possibly satisfy him for the very reason that, unlike Mozart, he was not merely a musician, but also a poet, and, above all, because each one of his works sprang from a profound dramatic idea which was intended to be realised on the stage. He was unable to set a text to music ; on the contrary, the poem and the music had, closely blended, to emanate from a single source, namely, the Drama. And in the heart of the poet Wagner they had been one from the beginning, but in carrying out his ideas certain inequalities and deviations in the use of the mediums of expression manifested themselves ; in part

these were due to the whole aspect of our conception of "Opera," but in part also to a deeper cause. This cause was revealed to Wagner in the year 1848.

For when after completing the almost purely musical work "Lohengrin," he began to work out a new drama, namely, "Frederick the Redbeard," he realised that the latter stood in no need whatever of music, which for Wagner was tantamount to saying that it did not admit of music. Then suddenly he became aware of the fact that the problem itself had been wrongly set forth. He began to realise that it was not a question of "how?", but of "what?" The question to be put must not be: "How can word and tone together work towards the realisation of a supreme and exhaustive dramatic expression?", but: "What subject calls for such a lofty expression, and consequently requires it, for its artistically complete representation?" The question "how?" is, in comparison, of secondary importance and does not perhaps admit of any dogmatic response.

I would ask the reader to be quite clear in his mind about the great fundamental signi-

ficance of this change in the form of the question to be answered. For from this "what?" emanated the new and most perfect dramatic art, an art which is distinguished from the other forms of drama, not only by the choice of the mediums of expression, but, on the contrary and above all, through its substance which calls for the new mediums of expression. As soon as the question had been clearly put, the answer, too, was ready at hand. How had it indeed been possible for the man, who already ten years ago had unconsciously offered the solution of the problem when he conceived the "Flying Dutchman," not to have now immediately found the answer? It came like a sudden revelation: "A subject which is comprehended merely by the intelligence can also be expressed merely through the language of words; but the more it expands into an emotional concept, the more does it call for an expression which in its final and essential fullness can alone be obtained through the language of sounds. Hereby the essence of that which the Word-Tone-Poet has to express results quite by itself: it is the Purely Human, freed from all conventions."

(IV, 388.) The creative achievement of Wagner's life is summed up in these few words.

Inasmuch as the direct impulse for arriving at this conclusion was furnished by his work on "Frederick the Redbeard," the year 1848 became the turning-point in the history of Wagner's artistic creation. Just as his life was, so also was his artistic production divided by the year 1848 into two sharply defined periods. Each of these comprises thirty-five years. The former period is that of unconscious, the latter that of conscious artistic volition.

Nothing could be more misleading than the general division of Wagner's stage productions into three groups, of which the first goes as far as "Rienzi," the second comprising "The Flying Dutchman," "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin," and the third embracing the later works. Instead of furthering the understanding, this generally accepted dictum of the "three manners" belongs, on the contrary, to those superficial ineptitudes which serve to render an insight into Wagner's so simple career practically impossible. The inaptitude of this subdivision is already sufficiently proved

by the fact that the "Flying Dutchman" already existed in its definite form before the composition of "Rienzi" had been finished, and that between the "Flying Dutchman" and "Tannhäuser" Wagner wrote "The Saracen," which again bears resemblance to "Rienzi." If we penetrate to the heart of the matter, we shall find that Wagner's impulse towards dramatic composition, starting with his childhood, moves forward in a single straight line; in view of the grand simplicity of this creative impulse, the superficial accidents disappear, and whoever undertakes to explain Wagner must also expose their nullity. On the other hand, the division into two periods corresponds to an inner process and serves to express a profound truth. Wagner himself says: "When I abandoned 'Frederick,' of my own entire will and consciousness, I had entered on a new and decisive period of my artistic and human development, the period of conscious artistic volition in an entirely new direction, which I had taken owing to an unconscious necessity and in which, both as man and as artist, I am now advancing towards a new world." (1857.)

The works which follow, composed on the basis of the realisation referred to above and freed of the spectre of Opera, reveal to us this new world.

Were these two periods separated by a mathematically drawn line of demarcation? No, that would be psychologically impossible. At the outset new dramatic ideas swarmed in upon the poet, who, still dazzled by the suddenly revealed light, was unable to carry them through to a perfected form, but who, none the less, in "*Wieland the Smith*" and "*Jesus of Nazareth*" has left splendid marks to bear witness to this period. Thereupon Wagner realised the need of concentration, and in the now following series of essays he procured for himself complete clearness with regard to the significance and the extent of his own achievement. "If I can look back with any satisfaction on the literary rôle I have been enacting during the last years, it is only in as much as I feel that I have thereby managed to become quite clear in my own mind," writes Wagner to Uhlez. "*Art and Revolution*" (1849), "*The Art-Work of the Future*" (1850), "*Opera and Drama*" (1851) are, as a matter

of fact, soliloquies ; who, indeed, was to have understood them at that time ? And we know that, as a matter of fact, they were comprehended by no one. Wagner himself confesses : “ I could not help always appearing to myself like a soliloquising, lonely wanderer.” It was only in “ A Communication to My Friends ” (1851) that he again addressed himself to the world ; but no longer now, as in 1848, to all his contemporaries, but merely to his friends, that is to say, to those who with him wish “ to advance towards a new world.” Then, and then only, he again turned to his dramatic production.

One recognises that the essays mentioned form an essential part of his artistic production. It is only in these essays that Wagner acquired the consciousness of his own significance, and it would seem that we, too, if we concentrate ourselves on these essays, cannot help but acquire an exhaustive consciousness of what Wagner is. For even if the new dramatic art Wagner created evolved organically from the older artistic forms, it is no less certain that if the former is to take root and blossom forth, the soil must be prepared, which can only be

effected through an understanding of that which was attempted.

Wagner is “advancing towards a new world”; nowhere in the old world can his art flourish, and least of all in the place usually allotted to it—the operatic stage; and Bayreuth is but the nearest approach possible to the thing he dreamed of. These essays of Wagner, written in the solstice of two periods of life, are the true source of wisdom for us all, who likewise stand on the boundary of two epochs of the world and of art.

It is necessary, then, for the more definite purpose of this chapter for us to realise that it is only from this point of vantage that we can gain a clear view of Wagner’s entire dramatic production, of that which has gone before, as well as of that which is to follow. For this reason the ensuing chapter shall be devoted to a closer consideration of the main result of these essays regarding the Word-Tone-Drama. Only when we have gained a clear conception thereof shall we proceed to examine the individual works, and that always from the standpoint of the Art-Work, realised and undertaken with complete consciousness; we

shall then recognise that the works of the earlier period are the expression of an inner striving after something clearly divined, but not as yet logically grasped, and thereby again we shall have prepared a broader and more fertile foundation for judging the works of the second period.

## II

### THE TEACHING OF THE WORD-TONE-DRAMA

“Redemption for the Redeemer!”

RICHARD WAGNER.

THE consideration which we must now give to the decisive achievement of the year 1848, the “determination of the subject which the Word-Tone-Poet has to express,” will be a brief one. The object of this essay is but to initiate and to stimulate; for this reason the connoisseur, I trust, will pardon my passing over much that is important; it is done purposely. Moreover attention will be called to many points on other occasions. For the present I intend only to bring forward as much as may be unquestionably needed for illustrating the question to be dealt with.

There are, in fact, as Wagner has clearly set forth in “The Art-Work of the Future,” three purely human forms of art: Dancing, Music

and Poetry. The antique drama resulted from the co-operation of these three arts. The mediums of expression at the command of these three forms of art have been changed and enlarged in the course of centuries ; and this is especially true of the musical art, which, "in consequence of a deep inner need" of all modern humanity," has, in spite of its chary beginnings, grown to be a mighty power. But to-day, as much as ever, the perfect drama will only be able to come forth out of the co-operation of this trio (whereby it must be clearly noted that by the art of dance we must understand pantomime in its widest sense, that is, also every gesture and every visible movement). That this is so follows naturally from the conception of a "perfect drama," which can only be one which appeals to the entire man.

But in order to obtain a clear conception of what the "entire man" signifies, we must think of him as composed of two elements ; all the thinkers of the world, however varied their terminology may have been, have recognised this fact. This does not, however, go to disprove the actual unity of the individual.

Man exists as a creature of logical thought, forming his conceptions through his senses, and as one who intuitively conceives and expresses himself through his feelings.

Now if we approach this phenomenon, not from the philosophical, but from the artistic standpoint, it may be summed up most clearly in Wagner's own words : " Man is both exterior and interior. Those senses to which he appears as a subject for artistic contemplation are hearing and sight ; the exterior man appears to the eye, the inner man to the ear." (III, 78.) Frequently Wagner also refers to the exterior man as the " bodily " and to the inner as the " emotional man." (" Herzensmensch," i.e. lit. " Heart-man.") But between these two, the eye and the ear, stands the intelligence, of which the function, inclined towards the senses—in other words, the artistic function—is that of imagination. Thus we have here also a triad : that of the eye, ear and intelligence, which bears a strict parallel to the afore-mentioned arts of Dance, Music and Poetry.

Now Wagner's fundamental principle is the following : " Wherever it is a case of finding

the most direct and, at the same time, surest expression of what mankind can find to say that is highest and truest, there the entirely complete man must come into action, and that is the intellectual man, blended with the bodily and the emotional man in closest and all-transfusing love,—but no one of these by himself." (III, 81.)

We may or may not share this view, but, at any rate, he who is not acquainted with it and who has not completely understood it, has no right to discuss Wagner; otherwise it is impossible to know what he was striving for in his artistic creations.

The next question is, in what relation now do our ordinary conceptions of Musician and Poet stand to the definition of the "complete man" which has just been given?

By a musician we understand, almost without exception, an artist who appeals exclusively to the ear, in other words, exclusively to the "emotional man." The poet, on the other hand, if he only writes for the reader, appeals exclusively to the imagination; if he is a dramatist, he, of course, uses the ear as the organ for communicating the intellectual

idiom, but in reality he only appeals to the imagination and to the eye. Poet and musician combine to appeal to the eye and the ear in the case of dance, to the imagination and the ear in the case of song. It is sufficient for our immediate purpose to ascertain, that when, as has just been stated, the dramatic poet appeals to the imagination and the eye, and the musician to the ear, the two combined must satisfy the requirements of the "entire, complete man"; whereby we must not fail to note that the poet acts on the imagination not only through the intellect, but, as seer, also provides the tangible figure on the stage for the eye, as well as the defining gesture and the scenic surroundings. In this sense we can therefore affirm that the perfect drama requires the co-operation of Poet and Musician.

But how shall we represent this working together? With regard to this point it is essentially necessary to gain entire clearness.

The poet is the inventor, the narrator, the seer; he is, as Wagner puts it, "he who is conscious of the inconceived,"—one who intends: that is, it is he who starts from the visible, conceivable world to escape from it by

the celestial ladder of the imagination. And where does he arrive? In the world of emotions. "It is only by means of the imagination that the intellect can associate with the emotions" (IV, 100). Music, on the other hand, possesses no sort of point of contact with the visible world, "it is nothing less than a revelation of the other world" (VII, 149), or as Schopenhauer puts it: "it reveals the innermost soul of the world and utters the profoundest wisdom in terms not comprehensible to the human understanding." Nothing could be more erroneous than the assertion that music is in any sense an outflow of the imagination; its world is the shapeless world of the emotions; but "it is owing to the universality of the language of music that our imagination is so easily aroused by it and thereupon attempts to give shape to that world of phantoms whose appeal to us is so direct, which is invisible and yet full of such vivacious motion." (Schopenhauer.) Here, then, we have the point of contact. The poet—or let us rather say, the poetical side of every human being—grasps what is given to it through the contemplation and the intellect

in order to construct, by means of the imagination, a new world for itself ; but the impulsion thereto, the necessary "arousing of the imagination," is imparted to the "intellectual man" through the yearning of the "emotional man" to give a form to the inconceivable and invisible—to the other world which he bears in his bosom.

Now this "other world," although not open to the eye nor to the understanding, possesses none the less a language,—a language entirely direct, "revealing the innermost being," which, "however incomprehensible it may be according to the laws of logic, must possess a more compelling need to be understood than any contained in the aforesaid laws" (VII, 150) ; this language is music. But music also appeals exclusively to the "other inner man." It cannot communicate directly with the "exterior man." And just as we saw before that the understanding served as intermediary for the eye and the ear, so do we also recognise that in this case imagination and the creations it engenders mediate between the "exterior" and the "inner man." It is the yearning of the "inner man" which moves the "exterior

man" to poetry ; in this alone the two come in contact with each other. But if the poet wishes to do complete justice to the yearning of the "inner man," the creation of his imagination will be such that this "inner man" will be able to express himself therein through his own and only medium of expression, namely music. To be sure, the "inner man" will reveal himself in all forms of art, but, excepting the case of music, only indirectly as in a mirror and, especially in the spoken drama, on the reflected surface of an agitated sea, which never shows him quite simply, but rather leaves him to be divined through all sorts of distorted, wavering lines ; for here the innermost soul can only reveal itself by the circumvention of the language of the understanding and by means of the conclusions "a posteriori" which the actual achievement renders possible. But if the "inner man" is not satisfied thereby, then he must participate in the poem by means of his own language, and this language is music.

If music were, indeed, merely mathematics, as some have maintained, then we should not be here confronted with any problem. How-

ever, I hold a discussion of this fundamental question to be superfluous, as we have the living testimony of our own feelings that music is "expression." And here we have, indeed, a problem which confronts us: how shall this never-ending longing of music for a visible form, for a tangible shape, which it may embrace and draw up with it to its own spheres of pure emotional life, be satisfied? How far mankind could go astray in consequence of an outwardly formal culture, actually quite inimical to art, we can see in the case of "Opera." For in Opera, as, erected on a false basis, it has historically developed, we are confronted with an absurdity: absolute music, which accordingly only appeals to the "emotional man," engrafted on a poem which is already exhaustive in its appeal to the "intellectual man," and which, with the exception of a number of lyrical episodes, stands in no relation whatever to the invisible world of music. In Opera music is altogether the exterior part, the trapping out, so to speak, of the whole, whereas it is destined by its very nature to be always and everywhere the inmost soul of things. But together with this final

realisation we have also the indication of where the solution of the problem is to be found: it cannot be required of music that it should furnish the "expression" of any text taken at random, but the poem itself in the pictures which it summons up before our eyes, as well as in the characters and episodes with which it holds the intellect, must evolve entirely from the yearning of the "inner man," that is, it must be born out of the spirit of music. The "inner man" and music are here the lawgivers. It is only when the poet and the musician realise this that their collaboration can be a beneficial one, and that they will be able to produce a uniform and perfect Word-Tone-Drama.

In this drama, then, music brings our soul into direct contact with the soul of the hero of the action, whose personal self and whose destiny are communicated through the eye and the intellect; it reveals the "inner man" to us. But it does more than merely reveal the "inner man" to us, it reveals the whole inner world, that is, all that which remains closed to the logical understanding, which is concealed behind everything we see and

experience and which our soul feels without the language of words ever finding an expression for it. In other words, music reveals the Eternal, that which is eternally unutterable in the symbol which the poem offers to the eye and the intellect.

It should be evident, even after this brief consideration of the matter, that the highest form of drama can be only one which satisfies both sides of our secret nature in the manner indicated and that, consequently, it can only be produced by the co-operation of poet and musician. But it were well to give a preciser form to what has just been said. In order that the theoretical recognition of the fact, that a dramatic poem must be born out of the spirit of music, may become of practical value, it must be offered in a practically graspable form to the artist's logical comprehension. Then only the nature of the Word-Tone-Drama will be clearly comprehended and we shall be able to ascertain the conditions essential to the existence of the new art-work, which will necessarily not be the same as those essential to art-works which are only concerned with portions of our nature. This desired second

formula we shall be able to work out for ourselves lucidly and convincingly, if we now return to Richard Wagner and to a consideration of his historical development.

With regard to the perfect Word-Tone-Drama, born from the spirit of music; the intuition of this creation was a birthright of Richard Wagner's. There is no truth in the assertion that he arrived at the "conception of the "art-work of the future" by way of a reform of opera; incidentally it were an error of logic to suppose that by tampering with such an abortion as the opera, it were possible to arrive at the conception of the sublimest of all artistic creations. We have seen that already as a schoolboy he conceived drama along the main lines just explained. From the very beginning his poetic imagination forced its way impetuously to the very centre of that world of emotions in which the idea and the words must resolve themselves in music,— and on the other hand the unfathomable ocean of this world of emotions flows onward with a never-ending longing for a lucid form, for communication and for that free expansion, which it can only acquire when the entire

individual, by the force of imagination, is able to be carried away on its current. The gods had decreed that Wagner was to experience this feeling as no one before him had experienced it. It is just this which is characteristic of him and which gives the individual stamp to his poet's nature. From his childhood on, throughout his entire life, Wagner never strove after anything else but the drama ; but drama for him was always a work which should appeal to the entire individual, the " exterior " as well as the " inner man."

With regard to the second point, the case is a different one : namely, the question how such a drama was actually to be realised. Here was a problem which could only be solved by aid of the reasoning intellect. That is to say, that practical experience had to come first ; or, in other words, examples which could furnish fit subjects for contemplation. For pure, abstract reason alone cannot bring the slightest revelation in matters of art. Even the deep insight into the nature of art which Wagner possessed as a result of his rare knowledge of the Greek dramatists and of Shakespeare, and, on the other hand, of German

music, reaching its highest expression in Beethoven, could but serve to broaden his mind and sharpen his perception ; but it could not give him the solution of the problem. His professional association with opera, which made him acquainted with everything which had been produced in this sphere, could at the most prove to him that in this direction there was nothing to be hoped for ; even the marvellous feats of a Mozart must necessarily tend rather to bewilder than to elucidate until the secret had been discovered. Wagner had therefore to provide the needed example himself. Only when this had been done in a series of works in which Wagner, thanks to his intuitive instinct, had come very near to the solution of the problem,—only then came the revelation. It was at this point that, in order to form a lasting link between the two parts in human nature, the function of the dissecting and combining intellect had to be called in to aid ; it was necessary to obtain a clear insight. This clear insight Wagner only acquired after many years, exactly when he had reached the middle of his life, that is, in the year 1848.

This insight was as follows :<sup>1</sup> “ (1st) The things which are fit for musical expression are solely feelings and emotions: in a perfect form it gives expression to the emotional substance of the purely human language which has become distinct from our word-language, the latter serving merely as a medium of communication. (2nd) What thereby remains inexpressible for absolute musical language, is the precise designation of the object of the feelings and emotions, whereby the former itself gains a definite character: (3rd) the essential enlarging and expansion of the musical form of expression consists in the added faculty to designate also what is individual and exceptional with distinctive clearness, and (4th) this is only obtained by the union of music with the spoken language. (5th) But this union can only be a successful one when the musical medium of expression joins itself to begin with to that which is nearest and most akin to it in the spoken language; this connection must be established precisely at

<sup>1</sup> In order to facilitate the comprehension of this important passage, I have numbered the various links of this argument.

the point where in the language of words there already exists an undeniable desire for an actual and sensuous emotional expression. (6th) But this is only to be determined actually by the essential substance of that which is to be expressed, inasmuch as the latter changes from an intellectual to an emotional subject. A subject which is comprehensible only for the understanding can also be communicated only by the language of words ; but the more it expands into an emotional incident, the more surely does it also call for an expression, which the sound language alone can supply with the necessary completeness. (Deductions from this premise :) Hereby the subject which the Word-Tone-Poet has to express results quite by itself : it is the Purely-Human, freed from all convention (i.e. from all historically-formal convention)." (IV, 38.)

In the preceding chapter we saw how, historically speaking, Wagner obtained this insight ; it was occasioned through his work on "Frederick the Redbeard." But now, after having gained a clear perception of the essence of the perfect drama, we shall easily understand why it can exclusively represent

“ the Purely-Human freed from all that is historically formal,—in fact, from all convention.” This condition, this designation of the poetic material, is determined by music,—by the “ inner man.”

It is, however, so essentially important that this point be grasped with complete and convincing clearness, that I must still tax the reader’s patience a little further.

We recognised as the foundation of the perfect art-work the immediate participation of the “ inner man ” by means of his medium of expression, that is, music. Now for the “ inner man ” that which is historical, conventional or accidental does not exist in any form whatever ; all this is comprehensible merely through the intellect, and this fact is most clearly demonstrated by music itself, which is incapable of representing any object comprehensible by means of the intellect or the eye. “ Only feelings and emotions are fit subjects to be expressed by the language of music.” (IV, 387.) “ Music never expresses any visible phenomenon, but merely the inner substance of all phenomena.” (Schopenhauer.) The objection could, of course, be made that

just on account of the conventional conditions of life, incidents may occur by which the feelings and emotions are passionately aroused,—or it may be maintained that since music expresses the inner substance of all phenomena, why then not also the inner substance of an historically-formal event? To be sure, in this very connection the gravest and most misleading errors exist, among Wagner's supposed adherents as well as among his opponents. And yet the matter is a very simple one, and one might well despair of human understanding to find this conclusive passage in Wagner often expounded to show that drama should merely concern itself with mythological subjects, when, as a matter of fact, Wagner's only work which is based entirely on a myth ("The Ring of the Nibelung") dates from the period of "Frederick the Redbeard," and he later treated not only legend, but gave us to see everyday life in all its aspects on the stage. We can, of course, find the Purely-Human everywhere; in this sense the designation of what subject alone is capable of expression by the Word-Tone-Poet contains no limitation whatever. The intense eagerness of latter-day

composers for Scandinavian myths—as if Norway possessed a monopoly of the Purely-Human—is simply childish. All that the definition intends to convey is, that it is only the purely-human element of any episode which can find expression in the perfect drama, wherever the poet may have obtained his inspiration from. Only in the measure in which he is able to grasp the purely-human element of any given subject and to set it forth with conviction, so that the spectator, himself, freed from all convention, forgets everything in the contemplation of the purely-human element,—only in as far as he succeeds in doing this will he be able to create a perfect art-work.

The reason of this is evident.

We saw this art-work evolve out of the longing of the “inner man,” or, in other words, of music. But if music was yearning for a definite form, the poet, from all time, yearned for the emotional absorption of himself. The highest to which the poet could attain has ever been to divine the Purely-Human. If then both parts of human nature are to encounter and embrace each other, how could this be

otherwise than on their only common meeting-ground, namely, the Purely-Human? We have here a case of a mutual and twofold obligation; either one is at the same time the compeller and the compelled. The object<sup>f</sup> of the poet's longing is to let his individual, accidental creation resolve itself into a universal and eternal truth; but that can only come to pass where an absorbing identification of the former with the spirit of music takes place; as long as any accidental, conventional or formal element still adheres to this creation, such an absorption is rendered impossible, since music can only express that which is essential and common to all. The "inner man," for his part, longs for form; he wishes to be able to come into direct contact with the "exterior man"; he desires to converse with him in his own language, namely music, in order that he may thus carry him upwards into the world of the Eternal; but this he is only able to do when the poet has fascinated the eye with forms and the intellect with situations which can be entirely embraced by music. If music is not allowed this direct association with the "exterior man" by means

of the creations of the imagination, it is reduced to playing with itself and can never fulfil its designation, which is, to reveal the eternal in that which is transitory and the universal in that which is individual ; if music is given a subject in which the transitory is indeed transitory, that is, historically-formal, and the individual factor indeed accidental and arbitrary, that is, conventional, then it is at a loss what to do with it. In this case we have what all operas show us : on the one hand, a poetic production, on the other, a musical composition. If the composer chance to be a Mozart, a Beethoven or a Gluck, then whenever in the course of the intrigue, only comprehensible for the intellect, a purely-human moment occurs, we hear sublime music and are confused and depressed when immediately afterwards we are taken back to the arbitrary and unreasonable concomitant of word and tone. Therefore the Word-Tone-Drama must be born out of the yearning of the "inner man," in other words, music ; and for this reason also it can only depict that which is purely human, freed from all convention, from everything that is historically-formal.

The most important result of this is to plan the whole drama within. With regard to the so-called "action," the conditions imposed by the new art-work are essentially different to those of the spoken drama. The exterior events, which in the case of the latter take up the greater part of the poem, must in the Word-Tone-Drama be reduced to a minimum; on the other hand, the interior action, which the word-poet was only able to suggest or describe, now in fact constitutes the real action. The music, supported by the knowledge of the situation gained by the medium of eye and intellect, now directly depicts for us the inner life. If therefore the exterior range of the new drama is a strictly confined one, its inward expansion, on the other hand, is incalculably great; undreamt-of possibilities are now opened up to the poet.

With this definition of the subject matter the question, how the perfect drama is to be realised, how the harmonious co-operation of poet and musician is to be brought about, has been exhaustively answered. Technical rules there are none.

Now it will also become clear why Wagner

had in actual practice approached so near to the solution of the problem before his mind had gained a clear insight into the simple but secret heart of the matter. All his works, from first to last, were, in fact, born out of the spirit of music ; in all his creations the yearning of the “inner man” had been the controlling factor. But through the lucid and exhaustive mental insight into that which the Word-Tone-Poet is intended to express, he obtained for his own creations a very much stabler basis and an incalculably greater transfiguration of their form ; and by means of this insight he gave to the world the revelation of the highest work of art.

That was the achievement of the year 1848.

These indications will, I trust, have sufficed to give the reader an inkling of the significance of the newly acquired artistic ideal. But he must not suppose that a revelation of this sort can be immediately “grasped.” Only little by little the perception of what this means becomes clearer. I should, at the same time, like to put this great artistic achievement in the form of a symbol ; we shall then perhaps

penetrate further than by any historically logical demonstration.

Wagner says of music that it is the "redeeming art." We now can comprehend this fine utterance of his and there is no need for me to explain its meaning. But music can only exercise its redeeming virtue when the poet gives it that which stands in need of redemption. To what undreamt-of heights it can then carry us, when, freed from the artificial laws of its arbitrary self-dalliance, it can work solely for our release from everything temporal, everything that is confining, we have learned through Wagner's own works. It was, in fact, so-called absolute music which lay bound in fetters, and in every previous conjunction music—in spite of all apparent contradiction—was the subservient art.

Now music has become the dew falling from heaven which replenishes the source of poetic inspiration, and at the same time it is the unfathomable, vast ocean into which the streams of imagination flow. Wagner has released music. And this achievement cannot be more fittingly and exhaustively characterised than by the closing words of

“ Parsifal ” : “ Oh, miracle of sublimest salvation—Redemption for the Redeemer ! ”

Yes, the redemption of music ! the redemption of the “ inner man ” !—that was Wagner’s great achievement ; the redemption of music in and through the drama.

### III

#### THE DRAMAS OF THE PERIOD BEFORE 1848

“ To comprehend my intention became ever more clearly the principal object I had in view.”

RICHARD WAGNER.

**I**F we now look back, from this point of view, on the works which were composed before 1848, we shall find that we have gained quite a new comprehension of them. We shall then be able to pass on them a critical judgment which has nothing in common with the usual praise and blame, but one whose every assertion signifies some true insight.

The reader, I trust, will by this time have realised the justification of what was said at the beginning, namely, that “ Wagner only made use of opera because he needed a musical and scenic apparatus for the realisation of his dramatic intentions and thought that opera would afford him this.” It is by no means my object to quarrel with words, and I repeat, that I do not deny that Wagner had the

express intention of writing operas ; but it is impossible for us to come to a proper appreciation of the works of the first period, both for themselves, as well as for the rôle they play in Wagner's development, if we do not realise the fact that in their innermost being they are distinct from everything which we generally understand by opera. A clear appreciation of this fact is the first and most important realisation with regard to these works of the first period. From what has been said so far, this fact may already have been apprehended, but in the following I hope to be able to transform this apprehension into the fullest conviction, in order to show at the same time how we should use this realisation in order to arrive at a true comprehension.

In the first work, "The Fairies," we already find the purely-human motive of Redemption through Love as foundation and subject of the work. In this first work, thanks to a marvellous disposition of Providence, it is music which accomplishes this redemption by its miraculous function, representing in this case a force which is termed "the godlike in mortal." Through Arindal's fault his wife,

Ada, has been changed into a stone. With his cry of "Love conquers!" Arindal has already put to flight the infernal powers of darkness,—but how is he to release the stone from its enchantment? In despair he sinks to the ground, when he hears a celestial voice, which bids him "Seize thy lyre!" "Heavens! What do I hear!" exclaims Arindal; "yes, I possess the power of gods! I know the power of sublime tones, of that divinity which mortal man possesses!" He sings; his song breaks the spell and his beloved wife sinks into his arms. This work, which was only performed for the first time after Wagner's death, appears like a prophecy. In his later life Wagner said that "he could not conceive of the spirit of music otherwise than as love." Here we find the redemption of woman, in other words, of the inner being, brought about by song as a gift of love,—that is of the spirit of music,—given to the active, "exterior man."

The redemption of music through the drama! Fortunately it is not necessary for us to insist further on such symbols, for the most important thing for us is, that "The Fairies," without there being any necessity

for the pointing of symbols, already shows a drama born of the spirit of music in the form of an opera.

But in order fully to comprehend “The Fairies,” we must consider in connection with it the work which immediately followed, namely, “Das Liebesverbot.” Here the fundamental theme of the drama is also redemption, and that in a form which anticipates “Tannhäuser,”—the redemption of a sinful man through a pure maiden. It is, moreover, an admirable trait that in this case fraternal love consummates the work. But it is the absolute contrast of the working out of the “Liebesverbot” compared with that of “The Fairies” which most of all arrests our attention. Such a similarity in the main themes and such a difference in the works themselves ! Wagner himself once remarked : “Whoever should happen to compare ‘Das Liebesverbot’ with ‘The Fairies’ must find it hard to understand how such a striking change in direction could have been brought about in so short a time ! ” But perhaps we can after all understand it. In these first two works we already see that which was to be repeated in the later works,

appearing in pairs, and which I have designated by the handy explanation "it is here a case of conflict between poet and musician."

Doubtless the two works have been born of the spirit of music ; that is sufficiently proved by the two purely-human themes which run through both ; but the conscious recognition of the way in which poet and musician can blend into one is not yet apparent. In the case of "The Fairies" the poem is diffuse and uncompact ; it was evidently intended that music was to complete everything single-handed ; little care also has been expended on verse and diction. In "Das Liebesverbot," on the other hand, the action is at once rich, interesting and clear, and diction and versification are correspondingly carefully worked out. The work might, in fact, very well be performed without music. In "Das Liebesverbot" we also find the comic element represented in several excellent scenes. The impression in short is, that in the first work the text was merely intended to serve as a vehicle for the music, whereas the second is a work, carried through with a swing, to which music was to give an intenser vitality. A reason for

this is doubtless to be found in the subjects themselves, "The Fairies" being modelled on a fairy-tale of Gozzi's, "Das Liebesverbot" on a comedy by Shakespeare. This, however, does not bring us very far, for the very choice of these subjects is significant, and, furthermore, we see Wagner in both cases already working out his conceptions with such creative freedom that his complete independence cannot be questioned. No, we must look deeper than this, and in so doing we shall reach the following conclusion, namely, that in "The Fairies" a sufficient scope was not allowed the poet. Now we have seen that wherever the poet has not sufficiently "formed," the music is impeded in the development of its power of expression. Consequently the work had fallen short of Wagner's own artistic ideal, and that is why he now unconsciously chose a subject in which the creative function of the poet had necessarily to be a much greater one, namely, the subject of "Das Liebesverbot." But in doing so he fell into the other extreme, inasmuch as this work does not necessarily seem to require the co-operation of music.

The indulgent reader will have had little

difficulty in following me up to this point, but now we come to the realisation which makes these twin-productions so instructive for the comprehension of Richard Wagner and his art, namely, that in the weaker of these two productions with its ill-defined contours, the idea of the redemption through love appears with far greater force and lucidity than in the sharply delineated work "Das Liebesverbot" with its manifold action. How is this to be explained? The reason is, that "The Fairies" complies in a far greater degree with the law which demands that the theme which alone can and should be treated by the Word-Tone-Poet is the Purely-Human, freed from all convention. In these very first works we already find examples which prove the truth of this later revelation: only the Purely-Human can be represented in the perfect art-work. A second realisation, which a study of these works would afford us, I can unfortunately only put forward as an hypothesis, inasmuch as I am acquainted with the unprinted text of "Das Liebesverbot," but not with the music. It would be the following: that as a result of the better text of "Das Liebesverbot," the music

would in many cases considerably excel that of “The Fairies.” If this be really the case, as indeed a knowledge of the later works puts beyond all doubt, then we should have already here at the outset the proof, which later recurs so frequently, that the more the poet has let the spell of his poem control his eye and understanding, the more forcible is the development of his music. But there is no need for us to have recourse to hypotheses: a study of “The Fairies” is in itself sufficient. The more “operatically” a scene is treated, the weaker does also the music become,—the more dramatic it is, in the deepest sense of the term, the more significant becomes the music. I would refer principally to the scene of Arindal’s madness, which is almost perfect in beauty. But also in other passages, wherever the poem inevitably breaks away from the definite form, we find a diction so masterful and unique that the mighty Word-Tone-Poet of later days seems bodily to stand before us.

“Rienzi” stands in such an interesting relation to the first two works that unless we have studied their essential traits, we can hardly comprehend the former in its peculiar

construction. The two directions which we saw indicated in the first two works, Wagner in this case endeavours to combine. In common with "*Das Liebesverbot*," "*Rienzi*" shows us a manifold characterisation and dramatic emotion (i.e. dramatic in the old sense of the word); the endeavour to express everything in and through music shows the relationship with "*The Fairies*." But as a result of these advantages, "*Rienzi*" also displayed the shortcomings of the former works in an intensified form. The fault in the poem of "*Das Liebesverbot*" was that the conventional factor pervaded the whole piece, that is, the conventional with regard to manners and customs. In "*Rienzi*" it is the historically-formal factor which threatens everywhere to smother the purely-human theme underlying the work. If "*The Fairies*" did not satisfy Wagner, this was owing to the fact that in the true and perfect drama, after which he was unconsciously striving, the essential foundation for the development of the music is the poem, and no music, however excellent, can cover up the defects of the former,—on the contrary, it is just the music which shows up

these defects. Moreover, in "Rienzi" an even greater rôle is imputed to music than in the case of "The Fairies." For if we wish to sum up in one word the essential character of "Rienzi," we must admit that of all Wagner's works it is the one which most observes the designation of "music-drama." It is known that Wagner later protested against the appellation of "music-drama," which is usually given to his "Nibelungen Ring," "Tristan," etc., maintaining that this term could only mean "a real drama put into music"; but this very definition is the one which applies to "Rienzi." The poet has, to be sure, chosen a purely-human theme: the liberation of one's country, self-sacrifice in behalf of the generality, and already in "Rienzi" we see that fine poetic device whereby the same thing is exhaustively depicted by being impersonated in different characters: Rienzi, Irene, Adriano, —the work in fact abounds in poetry. But this purely-human theme the poet presents for us in a rich, historically-formal garb, such as would suit a spoken drama, and this whole he then hands over to the musician and demands that he shall "realise" the drama on the

stage. Even the diction, as Wagner confessed himself later, is "remarkably neglected." (I, 2 ff.) The result was a work of indisputable grandeur, in which the possibilities of music were extended to their utmost. Spontini, who in his old age witnessed a performance of "Rienzi," uttered, however, unconsciously a profound truth when he said: "C'est un homme de génie, mais déjà il a plus fait qu'il ne peut faire." If instead of "homme de génie," we put "music inspired by genius," we shall have summed up the essence of the matter. Music here had done more than it can accomplish. But for this comprehension of Wagner, for an insight into the essential nature of the Word-Tone-Drama, what it can and what it cannot achieve, and furthermore as a landmark in the history of music, it were difficult to overrate the importance of "Rienzi." The true significance of this work has not yet been recognised.

A circumstance which militates most against a deeper understanding of "Rienzi," is the generally current idea that this work was composed at a time when the musician in Wagner "still" had the upper hand of the poet.

Some regret that later he went astray in another direction, others are of the opinion that "Rienzi" is hardly worth their consideration, as the true Wagner is not yet manifest therein ; both ideas are equally erroneous. That Wagner intended in "Rienzi" to write an historic opera on a large scale which would open the way for him to the most important theatres, is a generally known fact ; but how far does such a superficial appreciation of critical history take us, when, on the contrary, a single glance at "The Fairies" and "Das Liebesverbot" shows us that "Rienzi" is the necessary and logical third step which the Word-Tone-Poet took in his search for the perfect art-work ? There is something so forceful and inevitable in the nature of genius, that exterior circumstances may, indeed, influence, but can never direct it. It is just where exterior circumstances appear as the controlling factor, that it is incumbent on us to penetrate the maze of circumstance and find the truly essential impulse. And here in "Rienzi" we find the intuitive striving to combine the excellence of the text of "Das Liebesverbot" with the complete musical development of "The Fairies."

But for a clear comprehension of the significance of "*Rienzi*," a retrospective glance does not suffice: we must also consider the work which was created simultaneously with "*Rienzi*." "Hardly was '*Rienzi*' finished," recounts Wagner, "than the ' Flying Dutchman' lay almost ready in its complete form." And he adds: "As far as my knowledge goes, I have been unable to discover in the life of any artist so noticeable a transformation in so short a space of time." Elsewhere he refers to "*The Flying Dutchman*" in comparison to "*Rienzi*" as "diametrically opposed." We are no longer here confronted with an unsolvable riddle, nor need we have recourse to the dictum of certain authors, who (relying on a misconstrued sentence of Wagner's) account for this difference between the two works by Wagner's yearning for Germany! The yearning which engendered "*The Flying Dutchman*" after "*Rienzi*" was simply the yearning after the perfect drama. In Wagner's mind "*The Flying Dutchman*" had been conceived long before he had seen Paris and, in fact, just at a time when the rosiest hopes were attracting him to this city, and the written sketch was

just on paper before the composition of "Rienzi" had been half completed. Here we are confronted with exactly the same phenomenon as in the case of the first two works, with this only difference, that in this instance it appears more forcibly and with far greater distinctness. "The Flying Dutchman" denotes a strong reaction against that which in "Rienzi" appears either as insufficient or short of the mark.

The two fundamental faults of "Rienzi," as seen from the point of view of the latter artwork, are the too abundant action and the appearance of the historically-formal factor. "The Flying Dutchman" came as a reaction against these shortcomings, inasmuch as in this work the action is reduced to the simplest form, and is placed quite without the historical domain. In this case, however, exterior circumstances have done us a bad turn, for originally "The Flying Dutchman" was intended to have consisted of one single act (VII, 160; IX, 318), in which case the character of the work would have stood out far more clearly than it does to-day, when, through the addition of matter which was foreign to the

original conception, it has grown into a three-act opera. "The Flying Dutchman" is nonetheless the simplest and most compact of all Wagner's works, and with regard to setting aside of the conventional and the historically-formal, it stands higher than "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin" and ranks with the works of the second period. This work also had a decisive influence on Wagner. True, on two occasions later on he again took up an historic subject, namely, "The Saracen" and "Frederick the Redbeard," owing to the fact that he had not yet obtained the necessary logical insight; however, he abandoned the working out of these subjects, because the experience he had gained from his former works had been an unconscious warning to him.

Wherein "The Flying Dutchman" as a work fell short of the ideal is easily perceptible: in the first place there is additional matter which conceals the splendid simplicity of the main theme in as far as it does not help to develop this theme; in the second place, there is something which is of far greater interest to us than these superficialities, something which Wagner himself has designated as a "diffidence."

Wagner had not dared to give full play to the world of emotions. His main care was the simplification of the action. Unconsciously he here set himself the task of engendering everything purely in the spirit of music ; but he had not yet clearly perceived that in his art-works, once the conventional factor, which is not only unnecessary, but harmful, has been removed, the purely-human element can and must expand all the more freely. He did not as yet know what later he perceived so clearly, namely, that the co-operation of music "would give to poetry an undreamt-of inflatus" (III, 185). Consequently the various themes which form the essential part of this splendid composition, would have required a far broader treatment than they have actually received. The "inner man," music, in fact, are really not accorded their full share in this case : the poet contents himself with conceiving characters quite in the spirit of the former, but does not undertake to work them out.—Another shortcoming of this work Wagner has himself pointed out. He observes that "in the ' Flying Dutchman ' the construction of the situation is, for the most part, still hazy." In

this remark the word "still" is misleading, as nothing could be more definite and precise than the construction of "Das Liebesverbot." The process is the following: In the case of "Rienzi," Wagner, in accordance with "Das Liebesverbot," had marked very sharply the general contours of the work. Then, in the reaction against the preponderance of the poetic function, the musician went too far in "The Flying Dutchman" and overlooked the fact that he did this to his own decided prejudice. For what is amiss with the poem of "Rienzi" is not the sharpness of the delineation, but solely the abundance of exterior factors and their formal element. On the contrary, a logical insight into the nature of the Word-Tone-Drama and Wagner's later works shows that the delineation of the few situations in the Word-Tone-Drama must be exceptionally marked. If music is to have free sway, the understanding must in a sense be hypnotised by having its attention fixed on a single point. Everything which is hazy in the text imposes an immediate penalty which the music will have to pay. And, as a matter of fact, the music of "The Flying Dutchman"

shows exactly the same qualities and defects as the text. The strict limitation of the poem to the purely-human element already points to the second period ; the same is true of the uniformity of the musical and thematic construction ; on the other hand, we find a certain aridness in the musical life of the work which corresponds to its scanty development of interior motives. Here we perceive clearly what we already saw in the first three works, namely, that the function of both text and music is equally to control and to be controlled, and this realisation is one of the fundamental requirements for the comprehension of Wagner's art.

On the other hand, two points in the music of "The Flying Dutchman" are of decisive value for the future drama : first, the symphonic construction with definite themes, secondly the treatment of the vocal parts. The symphonic construction is, to be sure, often interrupted, but only by the extraneous matter exacted by the operatic form ; with regard to the second point, we must not allow certain weaknesses and cadences to mislead us, but, on the contrary, recognise that much in

the rôle of the "Dutchman" is on a level with the "Nibelungen Ring."

"The Flying Dutchman" therefore denotes a big stride forward in the direction of the drama. But so far from there being any truth in the usual assertion that between "The Flying Dutchman" and "Rienzi" lies the boundary separating two periods, the fact is that these two works are most closely allied, for without "Rienzi" neither the advantages nor the defects of "The Flying Dutchman" could possibly be conceived of. How little a real transformation had taken place is to be seen from the fact that the next work to be conceived was "The Saracen." Although only the detailed sketch for the text of "The Saracen" exists, this suffices to show that we here have to do with another reaction, and this time in a direction in which no progress could be expected. After the noble severity of the "Dutchman" an historical subject in richest trappings! What is most interesting for us is the fact that Wagner did *not* work out this sketch.

Again after a pause of several years we come to the production of the last two works

belonging to the period of unconscious volition : “ *Tannhäuser* ” and “ *Lohengrin*.” But whereas the first four works were the result of an entirely interior process, inasmuch as they were engendered one after the other in the poet’s mind, without being performed,<sup>1</sup> —that is to say, without the outer world having been able to have a direct influence on this process of development, the ruins of shattered illusions which had been cherished for years lie between the completion of “ *The Flying Dutchman* ” and the working out of “ *Tannhäuser*.” It is true that the years in Paris had been rich in privation and bitterness of heart, but the real tragedy of Wagner’s life began when his “ *Rienzi* ” was accepted in Dresden and he himself was called there to the post of a conductor. In Paris he had been in want of daily bread, but here, where this was given him, he was suddenly forced to realise that just where he had hoped to find everything for his art, he found, in fact, that everything was lacking. Abroad he had been able to console himself with the idea that his com-

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of a single, extremely defective performance of “ *Das Liebesverbot*.”

patriots at least would understand him, now he perceived that their comprehension was, at best, but misapprehension. On all sides a desert world which neither understood him, nor expressed the slightest desire to do so, artistic conditions which in every respect went against his inmost convictions, and for the Word-Tone-Poet, who seeking his direct inspiration in the sublimest heritages which poetry and music have bequeathed to humanity in order to rear up the marvellous structure of a new and still sublimer drama, as sphere for his activity the operatic stage, which, with reason, laughed him to derision. There he stood, entirely alone.

However, the process of development towards a new form of art-work, as increasingly designated by the production of "The Fairies," "Das Liebesverbot," "Rienzi" and "The Flying Dutchman," was not interrupted by these events. Nowhere can we perceive more clearly the compelling necessity which sways genius than in this case where Wagner, in the midst of the temptations of easily acquired fame and assured fortune, and in the midst of obstacles increasing day by day, steered in a

straight course towards the realisation of the art which he had been called to create. None-theless, the impressions of this period had a manifold influence, and with regard to the art in question, we can regard this influence from two points of view : in the first place, we have the experience which the artist gained from the performance of his works with regard to these latter ; in the second place, we have the insight he acquired into the nature of our popular art in general, that is to say, into those conditions which an artist finds ready to hand for the actual realisation of his work,—the conditions of the stage, the performing artists and the public. The consequence of the first-mentioned influence was a speedier maturing of the insight into the formal laws of the art-work which is to present to the “exterior” as well as to the “inner man” Word and Tone blended together ; the result of the second was, first of all, the realisation of the general defectiveness of operatic form and the operatic stage, and, secondly, the final renunciation of all our popular forms of art, because of their direct antithesis to all higher artistic ideals. This explains the gigantic stride which

shortly after the sketch of "The Saracen" led to those master-works "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin."

But if we wish to gauge the significance of these two creations for Wagner's life and thence also their individual significance, the period in which they were conceived will have to be more nearly designated. These two works were composed at the crisis of Wagner's life. We need not even consider the well-known external incidents; the interior crisis in the artist's life suffices. In his heart Wagner bore an art which he was compelled to realise; his entire poetical and mental endeavour was concentrated on this art; already he had grasped it and lived in it alone, and yet the clear intellectual insight, the conscious control of a new form of art, was lacking. Who can realise his sufferings and despair? If after "Lohengrin" the insight acquired in the year 1848 had not come to bring him salvation, then, indeed, death would have been the only thing left to the artist; and we are perhaps not far wrong if we ascribe the continual failure of health, which became noticeable at this point, to the almost superhuman in-

tellectual strain and the intense emotion of this period. “*Tannhäuser*” and “*Lohengrin*” are the fruits of this period.

But however much we should regard both as the despairing cries of an artist’s lofty soul, which in the very moment in which it expects to perish hopelessly accomplishes the decisive achievement from which comes the saving insight, we should err decidedly were we not to regard these works as the integral parts of the sequence which was begun so peaceably with “*The Fairies*.”

After all that has been said, it will appear neither arbitrary nor artificial when I assert of “*Tannhäuser*” and “*Lohengrin*” that they stand in exactly the same contrast and complement to one another as “*The Fairies*” and “*Das Liebesverbot*,” and “*Rienzi*” and “*The Flying Dutchman*.” I feel certain that a true insight has been gained when we become conscious of the close relationship of these two works, “*Tannhäuser*” and “*Lohengrin*,” of which each one, in order that it may be judged aright, presupposes an exact knowledge of the other, not only in a moral, but also in a purely artistic sense. In

the case of each of the pairs mentioned the insight in question is an entirely analogous one, and the work in which the poet has had a greater part than the musician will always be the first to benefit by this insight, that is, "Das Liebesverbot," "The Flying Dutchman" and "Tannhäuser." For these works are those which are the most handicapped, owing to the fact that our operatic stages are entirely incapable of expressing a dramatic idea, and furthermore, also because the opera public is entirely unprepared for the reception of such ideas. For this reason the sequence "The Fairies," "Rienzi," "Lohengrin," in which the lyrical element predominates, stands in much higher favour with the public than the sequence "Liebesverbot," "Flying Dutchman," "Tannhäuser," in which this element is more or less in the background. However, the knowledge that these two series of works belong organically together should considerably facilitate the understanding of the comparatively less lyrical works. And when once the comprehension of the less popular works has thereby become a more thorough one,—when, for example, we have grasped what is

most essential in "Tannhäuser" and "The Flying Dutchman,"—then the counteraction will be inevitable, and we shall suddenly discover that our pleasure in the more popular works, such as "Rienzi" and "Lohengrin," was an entirely superficial one. Then will come for us a sudden revelation with regard to the latter, and for the first time we shall penetrate into their real secret! Everyone can gain this revelation for himself, and for this reason the appreciation of the mutual and complementary relation of "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin" is very essential for any deeper understanding of these two master works.

In this connection a retrospective glance from this standpoint on "Das Liebesverbot" and "Die Feen" is particularly instructive. We now can appreciate the progress made, and can clearly recognise how Wagner was drawing nearer step by step to the art-work of his intuitive conception. With regard to this first pair of works, it had been a question of the sharp contrast of two almost antagonistic personalities,—those of the poet and the musician; but now the poet has become so entirely steeped in the spirit of music that

his poetic production can only come in and through this spirit, and that we, for our part, feel obliged to ascribe the few shortcomings of "*Tannhäuser*" rather to the musician, who here and there made concessions to operatic form; on the other hand, in "*Lohengrin*" the musician is entirely a poet whose music has become the saviour of a poetic yearning.

If we, then, compare "*Tannhäuser*" and "*Lohengrin*," we shall recognise that Wagner, when he wrote these works, had practically already solved the problem of his art-work; but, as a matter of fact, he had not yet found the actual solution, since it is only by comparing the two works that we are able to realise what the perfect ideal is, and also, because in each of them, taken separately, a trace of the one-sided striving is perceptible to which the first works owed their particular form.

The fact that the subjects chosen had necessitated the peculiar form of these two works is not a valid contention, for also in this case the choice of the subjects is of greater significance than the subject itself, and, moreover, it cannot be contended that the

subject controls the artist, since it is clear that it is, in fact, quite the contrary. The perfect Word-Tone-Poet will become manifest, first through the choice of his subjects, secondly through the manner in which he fashions his subject for the purposes of the Word-Tone-Drama. And if we find in "*Tannhäuser*" a comparative preponderance of the poet, in "*Lohengrin*" of the musician, this is not a necessary result of the nature of the subject, but a proof that the creator of these works had not as yet a free and conscious control of his subjects, or, rather, of his own capacities.

Do these suggestions appear too hasty? My answer is, that it is not my purpose to write a critical work, but rather to offer the reader an inducement for individual reflection and thereby to facilitate a closer grasp of the subject. I had rather say too little than a word too much. But so as to prevent any misunderstanding, the reader will permit me to make one more point.

Suppose one attend in succession performances of "*Tannhäuser*" and of "*Lohengrin*" on one of our best operatic stages. On an unbiased mind the performance of "*Lohen-*

grin" will certainly make the greater impression. The greater pleasure derived from "Lohengrin" is, however, due to its faults, whereas the slighter pleasure derived from "Tannhäuser" is due to its very excellences. For in the case of "Lohengrin" the music holds such complete sway and the poem is in many places so entirely steeped in the spirit of music,—that is, to a degree in which the word is entirely dissolved in the emotions,—that if also (as is generally the case) those passages of the drama are left out in which a different relation obtains, what remains has the effect of pleasantly tickling our ears without our penetrating in any sense into the admirable drama itself. But in the case of "Tannhäuser" this is in no ways possible. There are, to be true, isolated lyrical passages scattered through the work, the pre-eminent beauty of which have made the work popular; on the other hand, the poet in this case asserts himself and creates with such forceful vehemence that all the "cuts" in the world cannot eliminate him, and that the music and action must appear downright unlovely and devoid of sense if the characters and the words of the

poet are not everywhere recognised as the essential element. I should not care to have to answer for the assertion that Wagner ever wrote a more magnificent drama than "*Tannhäuser*," it is just on account of its operatic form and the occurrence of musical passages in the old style that this work is so eminently instructive; for these antiquated forms and old-style passages become here meaningless as such, and it is only when this work is so performed that it acts on us merely as a drama and when the ancient forms are no longer felt to be such, but appear what they are in reality, that is, the novel, perhaps at times uncertain, utterances of a new form of art,—only then can we speak of an adequate performance. That is why those among the visitors of the Bayreuth Festival Plays in the year 1891, who had eyes to see and ears to hear, were obliged to admit that up till then "*Tannhäuser*" had been an entirely unknown work to them. Wagner himself at the close of his life remarked that he had never seen "*Tannhäuser*" performed in the way he had imagined it (IX, 253). For all these reasons I should like to designate "*Tannhäuser*" as the tragic

conflict of the poet. When Wagner wrote the work it was under the conviction that an early death would prevent him from carrying it through, and at the same time he felt "that with this work he was signing his death-warrant, as he could no longer hope that the modern world of art would grant him his life." (IV, 344.) It is the poet who feels this who now stands quite alone with the firm conviction that his work will never be performed "as he had imagined it."

But does the musician fare any better in this case? No. Whoever supposes this has not yet understood anything of the Wagnerian art-work. Here on the threshold of salvation we must once again admit this fact.

Of Lohengrin, the Graal-knight, Wagner writes that he realises that he is not understood, but merely worshipped and that, having made the confession of his divinity, he returns to his isolation, his hopes destroyed (IV, 363). Herewith the music of "Lohengrin" is clearly defined, especially when we add, that by "being understood," Lohengrin means "being understood through love." Of all Wagner's works "Lohengrin" is by far the most popular.

Its music is admired,—but is it understood? The question seems an idle and ironical one. For if this music were understood, then would Wagner himself be understood and the heart of the artist would be revealed to our eyes. Were "*Lohengrin*" understood, then "*Tannhäuser*" would be differently performed. And the key for the comprehension of "*Lohengrin*" is to be found just there where only he can find it who has penetrated into the innermost nature of Wagnerian art. A few words will suffice to give the needed indications.

In "*Lohengrin*" the connection between the "inner" and the "exterior man" is maintained through the eye rather than through the understanding. The imaginative world, which is here summoned up for us at the bidding of the inner yearning, is such, that the comprehending individual is at once brought to the limit of his horizon and is thence led over the bridge, of which the ancient Hindoos relate, into that other world,—the world of music. But the poet goes his way in silence, so to speak, and does not force us to follow him. Later, for example, in "*Tristan*," when the Word-Tone-Poet wishes to sever us entirely

from this world and conduct us over into the world of music, where "the night of death reveals to us its profound secret," he to begin with concentrates all thought and imagination forcibly and persistently on one single point ; the "exterior man" is first held bound and fettered with irresistible force. But this did not come to pass in "Lohengrin." If therefore we do not ourselves feel impelled, either by the force of insight or by intuition, to follow the path which the poet has but indicated, then all we experience in this work is a spectacle to the accompaniment of soft and pleasant music. And more than this "Lohengrin" has never been for the opera public.

Much, as we see, can be learnt through the practical example of these last two works of the first period with regard to the co-operation of poet and musician in the art-work of the future which we first regarded theoretically. These works are the genuine touchstone for the comprehension of Wagner ; for in order that they may be entirely understood, a connotation must take place with regard to them which is only possible for one familiar with Wagner's ideas. "Lohengrin," a work which

is almost entirely steeped in the spirit of music, comes off worst of all ; for although it meet everywhere with an admiration devoid of comprehension, no performance, however excellent, can of itself promote its true appreciation ; this must be born in the heart of every separate individual ; whereas there where the poet delineates sharply and minutely, that is in "*Tannhäuser*," a carefully prepared and adequate performance is able to establish the not quite perfect balance and to reveal to us the meaning of the whole.

Before going on to consider the works of the period of fully conscious volition in a new form of art, I should like to refer to the four dramatic sketches which belong to the dividing-line separating the two periods : "*Siegfried's Death*," "*Frederick the Redbeard*," "*Wieland the Smith*" and "*Jesus of Nazareth*."

The fact that Wagner, after he had realised the impossibility of bringing about an intelligent performance of "*Tannhäuser*," came to writing a purely spoken drama, should not really be a matter of surprise for us. Not only was he unable to make the drama of "*Tannhäuser*" intelligible to a biased audience, but,

above all, the herewith connected impossibility of ever having his music properly comprehended, was bound to bring him to the idea of writing a work entirely devoid of music. But apart from this exterior consideration, there was the more important interior factor: the question about the art-work of the future. How was it to be realised? Even those mighty creations "*Tannhäuser*" and "*Lohengrin*" did not offer the desired solution. And, as always, Wagner went searching in two directions simultaneously, and this time arrived at the absolute antithesis of a musical and of a merely spoken drama, "*Siegfried's Death*" and "*Frederick the Redbeard*." This antithesis finally provided the immediate means for solving the problem, in that Wagner now realised that the problem itself had been wrongly put. For what was the reason that "*Siegfried's Death*" called for the co-operation of music, and why was it that "*Frederick the Redbeard*" did not permit of it? Clearly the reason must be found in the subject itself as prepared by Wagner for dramatic purposes. Therefore the immediate question did not turn on a "how?" but on a "what?" And

therewith the answer, too, was found ; namely, that “ the subject to be treated by the Word-Tone-Poet is the Purely-Human, freed from all convention and everything historically-formal.”

We must, however, not overlook the fact that when Wagner finally renounced “ Frederick the Redbeard,” he also put aside “ Siegfried’s Death.” To be sure he preserved the figure of Siegfried, recognising it as a purely-human type in contradistinction to the historically-formal type of “ Frederick the Redbeard ” ; but of the two sketches neither one complied to the conditions established through the new insight he had gained. The usual acceptation, that he chose one and renounced the other, is therefore erroneous. “ Siegfried’s Death ” in its first version was only externally the same work as our present “ Dusk of the Gods.”

There now followed two other dramatic sketches on a large scale : “ Wieland the Smith ” and “ Jesus of Nazareth.” Both may be counted among Wagner’s most eminent productions, and every admirer of his art should be acquainted with them. But for the

special purposes of the present exposition they mainly interest us as being so intimately connected with the fundamentally important essays which succeeded them. Swiftly sketched in the enthusiasm of the insight just gained, the poet seems only to have realised through them how important this insight was, and thence arose the necessity he felt of retiring for awhile from the field of active artistic production into the calm of artistic contemplation. "I am richer in conceptions than in the force to carry them out," wrote Wagner at this time. His force, in fact, was entirely absorbed by the construction of that monumental edifice, the Art-Work of the Future, which was achieved in three classical essays: "Art and Revolution," "The Art-Work of the Future" and "Opera and Drama."

At the beginning of this essay I maintained that "the works of the first not fully conscious period could be rightly judged only from the vantage-point of the period of acquired consciousness, as they form the step-ladder reaching to the consciousness of that which already existed." It was in this spirit that the preceding survey of the works was undertaken.

It matters not at all to me if I herein encounter the reproach of one-sidedness, for if I have indicated the one direction in which lies the gate whereby we may penetrate into the nature of these works, then I shall have accomplished a useful task. Should anyone accuse me of hastiness, I would remind him that the ~~object~~ of this essay is but to stimulate ; for the appreciation of a work of art cannot be communicated with pen and paper. Never for a moment did I dream of exhausting my subject ; this scientific spectre must not trouble us in the realm of art. On the contrary, in treating of art, it should not be one's object to say as much, but as little as possible, for every word—however respectfully uttered—is, in a certain sense, a violence done to the higher side in man which lies beyond the logical language of words and is the source of all art. Furthermore, I should like to observe that all preceding criticisms, advanced with regard to the works of the first period, are to be taken exclusively as a consideration from the point of view of the later art-work ; no absolute criticism of these works was intended, if for no other reason, because I share Wagner's conviction when he

says : " If the absolute critic considers the artist from his own point of view, he perceives absolutely nothing whatever"

After having now considered from the point of view of the new Word-Tone-Drama, as Wagner fully conceived it in the years 1848 to 1851, the series of works in which this new drama gradually won through ~~to~~ conscious formation, we shall in the following cast our glance, again from this same point of view, on the works which came into being after 1851.

## IV

### THE DRAMAS AFTER 1848

"Let us, to begin with, fix our glance on a definite intention, which we must recognise as the root of the beautiful tree to be, object of our longings."

RICHARD WAGNER.

"IN the great art-work of the future, common to us all, there will be eternally new scope for invention." These words of Wagner's can serve us as line of conduct for the way in which we should regard the works of the second period of his production. For it is not my object to give a list of the beauties contained in these works. Of what use, indeed, were this to anyone? Furthermore, the profound expoundings and explanations, in which so many take pleasure, have this drawback, that they but achieve the same object by a circuitous and tedious process which the art-work itself accomplishes with immediate and complete conviction. No, in dealing with the artist, we must ourselves

become artists, and that can only be when, filled with the joy of creation, we enter the workshop of the artist, freed and rejoicing in his production, and let him show us what it means when he says, that in the art-work of the future there is eternally new scope for invention.

We feel reason for alarm at the results our culture has on the human mind when we find a character of such transparent clearness as Wagner's meeting everywhere with misunderstanding. This phenomenon is most painfully noticeable with regard to Wagner's great dramas. The number of those who really show comprehension is an extremely limited one ; on the one hand we meet with inane moloch-worshippers who fall stunned to earth under the tremendous impression of these works ; on the other hand, with such dullness of mind, that these marvels of art make no impression whatever, or are regarded as eccentricities, perversions, etc. Then there is yet another class of persons who, admiring these works in their hearts, nonetheless fear nothing so much as that the spark might be fanned into the flame of fervid enthusiasm, whereby they then

might appear “one-sided,” and who therefore intentionally give a pale and anaemic development to their soul. This relation towards genius is sad in the extreme. Never did the soul of artist live more freely than in Richard Wagner, and only free, artistic beings are able to understand and love him and his works. Whosoever has not an untroubled artistic eye can never recognise the tremendous greatness of Wagner, and whosoever has not a proud heart in him will never understand that in the world of art this greatness denotes no barrier. I utter this opinion at this point because I believe that in judging Wagner’s works we must beware of two dangers: on the one hand, of empty praise-offerings, as these are entirely useless and cannot advance us one step further in the understanding of these works,—on the other hand, of the usual criticism, which likewise does not bring the slightest gain. Both these methods of procedure are eternally and absolutely sterile. If, on the other hand, we adopt the standpoint of Wagner, if we regard his idea of the “art-work in common,” generated by the spirit of now liberated music, as the doubtless greatest achievement of his life,

and if finally we regard his works as attempts to realise this ideal and as proofs that in this art there will be eternally new scope for invention, then I believe we shall be pursuing a really useful purpose. Under Wagner's own guidance our horizon with regard to inestimable possibilities and the unlimited capacities of the new drama becomes an ever wider one,—and as a counteraction of this we shall find our comprehension of the eternal beauties in the works of the Bayreuth Master becoming ever more complete and shall learn to regard them, as all high art, in the light of revelations of a world whither our praise-offerings nor our critical blame can never attain.

In the following I shall attempt to stimulate this point of view. But what I offer are merely indications, even more so than in the case of the dramas of the first period; the task of developing and continuing the thought must be left entirely to the reader, for even to give only a somewhat detailed account of the four great works of the second period in the above sense would fill a considerable volume. With regard to my method of expression, I shall, for the sake of simplicity, continue to make use

of the terminology occurring in the second chapter of this book and shall not presuppose a deeper initiation into the artistic views developed by Wagner in his essays. The poet and the musician, the "exterior" and the "inner man," will also in this case often appear as separate forces, although it is just in these works that they acquired the full consciousness of their unity. This separation is furthermore entirely justified by the difference in the medium of expression, only it must not be taken in a superficial sense, but must be felt in its fullest significance.

*"Tristan and Isolde"*

The very first work belonging to the period of full consciousness appears to us as the fruit of an entirely new art.

If, for example, we compare "Tristan" and "Tannhäuser," we shall learn to differentiate clearly between the intensity of mere creative power, begotten of genius, and the significance of a logical insight into the nature of the new art-work. This differentiation is of great importance; for the intensity of a talent is just as purely a personal matter as is its dis-

tinctive colouring, whereas the insight into the nature of the tragedy conceived in the spirit of music can become common property for all. Wagner has said of himself that the stride he made from "*Tannhäuser*" to "*Tristan*" was greater than the one he took from his first standpoint to "*Tannhäuser*"; it is possible for all artists to accomplish this step; however great or small their talent, the relation would remain the same. The poetic inspiration and the power of creation are no greater in "*Tristan*" than in "*Tannhäuser*," but by virtue of the knowledge of the Word-Tone-Drama's essential conditions a complete control of the medium has been acquired. The control of the artistic medium,—and this should be well borne in mind,—is first of all apparent in the limitation of the political content; the organ of the "inner man," that is music, is no longer put to uses for which it is unsuited; instead of a text, comprising passages which do not require a musical expression and to which nonetheless a musical accompaniment is to be made, we have here a poem which is entirely born of the longing of music to find expression in poetic forms. On

the other hand, with regard to the domain open to music, the domain of the Purely-Human, the poem now develops to proportions never dreamt of before. That is to say, on the one hand we have a strict limitation, on the other a mighty expansion. And when we now go from a consideration of the whole to a consideration of details, we again find as the significant factor the free sway of music, which at every moment gives itself only as it can give itself without doing violence to its innermost being, and from this results an incalculable diversity in the relation between music and the spoken words.

Perhaps we cannot do better than to choose out of the many points which "*Tristan and Isolde*" offers for our instruction these two extremes for our closer consideration. On the one hand the poem in its general, differentiated conceptions, on the other hand the fusion of Word and Tone in the working out of details. To begin with we will take the general conceptions.

Wagner's "*Tristan and Isolde*" is not, as is often lightly stated, another version, a dramatis-<sup>ation</sup> of Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan-*

poem ; it is the new poetic treatment of a subject which has been treated times out of number. The exterior aspect of the characters is, to be true, taken mainly from Gottfried, but much also from other poets. Wagner, as is known, had a very wide field of knowledge. Many important poetical moments point directly to the French treatment of the subject, certain verses following almost word for word Thomas le Trouvère, and above all the knowledge of the original, simple form of the myth, which only later was expanded into a romance of chivalry of ever-increasing differences, may not have been without influence on Wagner's creation. But the following is important above all : in the first place that he adhered in the opening act to Gottfried's conception, familiar to us all, whereby a number of explanations became superfluous and the briefest references could suffice, and secondly that, partly by using material which he found scattered in the works of other poets, but still more through his original invention, he called forth an entirely new poem, having nothing more than its name in common with that of Gottfried's poem, which, through its strict reversion to the domain

of the Purely-Human, recalls the ancient and ever-true myth, and gives us a splendid example of how to create in the new drama.

Gottfried von Strassburg needed over eleven thousand verses to arrive as far as the love-potion ; Wagner takes all that is necessary to understand the emotions stirring in the hearts of Tristan and Isolde from this previous history and relates it in sixty lines. And not only is this preceding narrative shortened, but above all it is given a firmer and more definite shape ; everything is concentrated on the leading characters. Not Isolde's mother, as in Gottfried, but Isolde herself has healed Tristan during his former sojourn in Ireland ; not her mother, as Gottfried recounts, but a glance of Tristan's eyes hindered Isolde at that time from slaying him :

" He gazed into my eyes,  
And for his sufferings  
pity befell me ;  
—the sword—I let it fall :  
the wound which Morold gave him  
I healed that he might recover."

Which means that they loved one another at first sight, and not, as in Gottfried, only after the potion. The significance of these traits is,

I take it, clear to everyone ; they are taken from the French poems. But that admirable lever with which he transposes the whole drama once and for all from without to within as soon as he has exposed concisely the conditions on which the action depends, namely, the *Death-Potion*, is entirely Wagner's own poetic invention.

The fact that this main trait of Wagner's poem, the *Death-Potion*, by virtue of which alone the otherwise very frivolous and superficially sensual poem becomes the most sublime song of hopeless but purest love, rising with a single sweep of its wings far above all sensual desire,—that this trait, I repeat, is almost always overlooked, is nothing short of incredible. If works such as "*Tannhäuser*" and "*Lohengrin*" meet with misunderstanding, there may be some explanation to bring forward, but when a situation is exposed for us with such unexampled lucidity and power as in the first act of "*Tristan*," and yet is not comprehended, well . . . then even the gods, I take it, contend in vain.<sup>1</sup> Now what is the

<sup>1</sup> See Schiller's often quoted expression that "against fools even the gods contend in vain." The Translator.

meaning of the Death-Potion? A glance at the earlier poems will tell us. None of these speaks of a Death-Potion, but only of a Love Potion, and in every case, but especially in Gottfried, Tristan and Isolde drink this potion quite accidentally; they are thirsty, Brangaene is not at hand, and unsuspectingly they take the dangerous draught from the chest and quench their thirst with this presumable wine; and straightway, narrates Gottfried, Love was there and crept into both their hearts. And thereupon from the love thus begun evolves an endless series of frivolous and shameless adventures, in the course of which, with Brangaene's aid, King Mark is constantly made a fool of and Isolde flies from the arms of her royal husband into those of her lover and back again. Thanks to the magic of his descriptions and the perfection of his diction, Gottfried's poem is beyond doubt eternally beautiful, but we must admit that the whole is directly repulsive in its indecency, and the love of this Tristan and of this Isolde, who live quite happily in their "*ménage à trois*" as long as no one disturbs them, has nothing of the heroic and tragic in it. The dramatisation

of such a subject could perhaps only be left to a Frenchman,—Dumas  *fils*, for instance. But how is it in Wagner? In Wagner they love each other from the very beginning ; so passionately are they in love that Tristan does not dare to approach Isolde, and that Isolde hates Tristan for bringing her to another man to wed. But their love is the love of heroes ; never does the idea of dishonour sully the childlike purity of its lofty brow. For them death alone remains ; and when Tristan takes the deadly cup from Isolde's hand, he can well exclaim with pride : “Tristan's Honour—highest Faith !” And only now that both have drunk the poison and that death will overtake them in a moment,—has, in fact, already put an end to their own sensual lives,—now their eyes may meet and sink themselves in one another with undisguised truthfulness, and dying they whisper to each other : “Tristan !” “Isolde !” In death is truth. But Brangaene, to save her mistress's life, had exchanged the potions, and had poured out a love elixir in place of the death-potion ; now “unavoidable, eternal distress—for quick death” is the lot of this heroic and innocent

pair. But what significance can the death-potion, as such, have in this case for Tristan and Isolde ? Clearly none whatever. Their love was not such that a magic philtre could have set it aflame ; they *had* drunk the death-potion at the moment when they thought they were drinking it. The confession of their love they could no longer undo. Death had actually united them for love, and love had again dedicated them to death ! Isolde also says later on :

“ He who unites us,  
whom I offered you,  
let us ourselves  
to sweet Death dedicate.”

But also in Wagner the love-potion has a significance and a very profound one, in which truth and irony combined smile at us with melancholy. The World can never understand a love such as Tristan and Isolde's. It lacks every criterion and organ of comprehension for that which is heroic ; on the other hand a materially tangible, so-called “ explanation ” (which, of course, explains nothing whatsoever) entirely satisfies it. Thus Brangaene speaks of “ the secret ” of the draught with the full

conviction that this love is "her doing," and the noble Mark remarks: "When clearly was revealed to me, what before I could not grasp, how happy was I then to find my friend free of guilt!" The love-potion then redeems the hero from the certain contempt of those who could never understand him and who are now of the opinion that through the love-potion "clearly was revealed to them" what before they could not grasp. It appears that this function is to-day still assigned to the love-philtre.

I take it, that what I said will now be clear, namely, that the death-potion is the lever whereby Wagner transposes the whole action from without to within, so that henceforth the drama only consists of what passes in the innermost soul of Tristan and Isolde? A necessary consequence of this was that Wagner was bound to invent freely all that ensues from here on. The close of the first act and all the second and third acts are, in their main features as well as in their smallest details, an entirely new poetic conception. The very nature of the Word-Tone-Drama rendered possible and necessary an entirely new version and an entirely new solution of the poetic problem.

Here we have again reached the heart of the matter. In what does this drama differ from all other forms of art? In this, that the "inner man," through his organ Music, reveals himself quite directly, and that what passes within him, i.e. the "inner man," becomes henceforth the most important part of the action. The epic, legend, novel can only describe this; the spoken drama can only show us the symptoms of the real interior events, and that, firstly, only by means of the spoken word, that is, by the reflection of the soul's action on the intelligence, secondly, by means of bodily movement as perceived by the eye; and music by itself, absolute music that is, is like a beautiful eye which would float about bodiless in the air, with all its beauty almost an anomaly,—for this is the fundamental mystery of human nature, which we can but recognise and not question, that without a body no soul can be perceived, and that the loftiest ideal can only be reared on the foundation of what is visible and thinkable. The poem then endows music with a body. This body becomes visible for us on the stage and seizable for our understanding by the

mediation of the spoken words. In this way the new Word-Tone-Drama comes into being; but it should be apparent to every thinking individual that, since in the new drama the soul—by the mediation of music—speaks directly to the soul, the laws of dramatic construction must differ from those of every other drama. Now the first living example we have of this is "*Tristan and Isolde*."

In this drama we at first see a rapid and powerful converging up to a single, mathematically fixed point, but after that an ever more widely expanding development up to the point where all parts are resolved in the entire whole, "submerged in the trembling All of the breath of the Universe." And herewith we see the illustration of that which we had clearly recognised in the essay "*Opera and Drama*," namely, that "the Word-Poet should concentrate all factors of the action, emotions and expression on to one point, which should also be the one most easily perceived by the feelings, whereas the Tone-Poet has then to expand to its highest degree this densely concentrated point in proportion to its full emotional content" (IV, 174). In that the

shadow of death has fallen over Tristan and Isolde, they have so completely left behind them the world of unavoidable conventions and falsehoods that this world can only come into exterior contact with them.

“ Whoever has lovingly  
Contemplated the night of death,  
To whom it has revealed  
Its deep secret,  
For him honour and fame,  
Power and gain,  
So dazzlingly bright,  
Like glittering sun-dust  
Has vanished in air.”

For them, and also for us in the audience, the visible world hardly exists any longer. Only what passes in the souls of these two, Tristan and Isolde, retains reality ; all else is, as Tristan says, “ Spectres of the daylight.” But within these twain souls the most consuming, the most passionate action is enacted, the entire tragic conflict of those “ consecrated to night ” against the “ day ” which is enclosing them, till the final dissolution in death.

This is the content of the second and third acts. No other species of drama could have set itself such a task, since not one possessed the means of accomplishing it. For since the

action has become entirely interior and psychic, "almost nothing is enacted but music," to quote Wagner's own words.<sup>1</sup> Without music such an action cannot in any way be represented, whereas by means of music we actually participate in what occurs.

This is the only time that Wagner has, so to speak, translated the action before our very eyes and placed it so entirely within. All the more valuable is this work for the comprehension of the nature of his Word-Tone-Drama. Above all, we learn that our conception of action must needs be very much extended, and in so doing we can at the same time successfully clear up one of the most deeply rooted misconceptions with regard to the new drama. Touching this new conception of dramatic action, we must attain full clearness.

The previous forms of dramatic poetry, however much they may have aimed at depicting events which take place in the inner soul, could plainly only show us action in two forms: through the motions of the intellect and through the motions of the body. In the new drama we have added to these the motions of the soul.

In the antique drama the intellect, I take it, was almost exclusively brought into play. This assertion is the less invalidated by the fact that music occurred in the antique drama inasmuch as the possible dramatic significance of the music—as a comparing glance at the entire construction of the drama of Æschylus and Euripides shows—decreases in proportion as the drama approached its full development. The intention of the songs of the choruses, as music, was probably much the same as that of its dances, namely that of elevating the mood of the spectator. The construction of the whole drama clearly proves that music could take no part in the realisation of the actual dramatic intention, but that it rather occurred as a lyrical element not immediately connected with the drama itself. The participation of the eye was of no greater dramatic significance. By way of example, we have but to see a tragedy such as “*Antigone*” performed. Not a single one of the so profoundly moving episodes of the tragedy is enacted before our eyes,—not one! We can participate in the action only by the impressions produced on the minds of the principal characters and

their companions ; that is, by the recital of eye-witnesses, by the heart-outpourings of the main personages and their disputes, and by the impression of the whole on the non-participants as described by the choruses. In every case it is the Word, that is to say, the understanding, which reveals to us the action.

The modern drama, which found its culminating point in Shakespeare, differed principally from the antique drama in that it added the eye to the understanding. In place of the mask, we have the changing features of the face, in place of the narrations, the events which actually occur before our eyes. This, from an artistic point of view, was a step of exceptional importance, for all art reposes on the senses, and now to the many-jointed, but nonetheless only indirect medium of the intellect, was added the directly convincing medium of the eye. This step detached drama from literature, and thereby brought it all the nearer to a real conception of art. The fact that thereby the conception of a "dramatic action" and consequently also the dramatic forms were changed, is known to all (although it may still please æsthetes to assert to this day

that "the dramatic criterion has at all times and with all peoples been the same for works of whatever style"). But I should like, above all, to point out one thing ; namely, that the co-operation of the eye, that is, of the exterior sense, had as result a great absorption and a powerful inward concentration. The hero of the action stands in a much more immediate relation to us, and a consequence—at first sight paradoxical, but in fact strictly logical,—of the fact that the exterior episodes are immediately enacted before us, is, that these exterior episodes need be *less forcible*, and that our interest becomes more and more concentrated on what passes in the soul of the hero. The increase in the number of characters and scenes, which goes together with the co-operation of the visual sense, is also merely the result of the need to bring ever more light to bear on the inner life of those concerned. In the antique drama, where the visible action was only recounted, this visible and yet unseen action became thereby the main thing, for it necessitated manifold and poignant narrations. But here, where it is enacted before our eyes, the action loses in importance compared with the soul—

struggles of its principals ; and these take up more and more of the drama. A rôle, in fact, is given to the description and exposition of these inner states similar in importance to the exterior events narrated in the Greek drama. Thereby the idea of "dramatic action" is at the same time extended and concentrated inwardly. In this way we acquire an important insight, which I should like to formulate as follows : without the participation of the eye the drama would never have been able to arrive at the point of depicting the real tragedies of the soul, the depicting of a Hamlet or a King Lear, for instance.

Now Wagner calls in the ear in addition to the understanding and the eye ; not the ear as the purely material organ for communicating the language of the understanding, but the musical sense of hearing, whereby the innermost motions of the soul are communicated to the soul of the listener with a directness and conciseness not to be achieved in words. If by addition of the visual organ we had arrived at the point where "Hamlet" could be appreciated as a complete and beautiful dramatic *action* (which would not have been practicable

in Greek drama), we have now through Wagner taken a similar, but much greater, step forward. Together with the reflecting and narrating intellect and with the eye, immediate in its conviction, we have now the revelations which music gives us of the unseen world,—of that world within man. Consequently actions can now be immediately depicted which a Shakespeare had to avoid, or which he could only suggest by means of a wide detour. The most brilliant and convincing example of this we have just had in "*Tristan and Isolde*," when in the second and third acts the most passionate of actions, leading up to death, is entirely inward.<sup>1</sup>

In order to depict the sufferings of *Tristan* and *Isolde*, a Shakespeare would have had to

<sup>1</sup> In order to give an idea of the tangle of incomprehensible and agglomerated misconceptions which conceal this simple and clear insight from a public not used to think for itself, I should like, by way of example, to mention a learned and not unsympathetic critic, H. Bluthaupt, who sees in these acts "instead of dramatic progress, absolute motionless repose," and who refers to Shakespeare's "*Romeo and Juliet*" where "the contrary is fully developed and where the action flows constantly onward." To be sure, he quotes in support of his assertion some of the best-known of Wagner's followers, one of whom calls "*Tristan and Isolde*" "a lyrical poem, comparable to Goethe's '*Fischer*'!"—The rest is silence.

invent a number of intrigues and scenes, which would have served to throw more and more sidelights on their characters, and at the end he would probably have found no other solution than to let Tristan fall by the sword and Isolde take poison. Wagner, on the other hand, was able to concentrate his entire poetic force on the one and only *true action*. In the second act we see how the tragic passion in its furious career leads up to the inevitableness of death, in the third act how the spirit gradually triumphs over the body, till in the Love-death it soars untrammelled out of a world inimical to love, the world of conventions and falsehoods.

Herewith I think that I have pointed out the most essential features of the general poetic form of Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde." If he continues his considerations, the reader will find in this poem sheer exhaustless material for artistic contemplation.

While pointing out certain details of the working out, I shall in closing have occasion to point out that this transposition of the action so entirely within, "where hardly anything but music occurs," is no compelling necessity of the new dramatic form. In

“Tristan” this was necessitated by the subject, that is, the action ; and that is why Wagner did it. But in the same way that Shakespeare’s drama is richer and freer in its movements than that of Sophocles, and notably for the reason that the former had added a new medium of expression to those employed by the latter, so also the Wagnerian drama is richer than Shakespeare’s. The poet has now so many mediums of expression at his command, and he is free to apply them in such various combinations, that, as Wagner says, there will be ever new scope for invention in this art-work. But even without leaving “Tristan and Isolde,” and if we do nothing but consider the relation between the language of the understanding and music, between Word and Tone, we shall see that this relation varies at every moment, to wit, according to that which is to be expressed, in other words, according as the emotional content to be communicated addresses itself more or less to the understanding, the eye or the soul. Nowhere, I believe, does that which I called before the *redemption of music* through Wagner’s drama stand out before us more clearly and delightfully than

when we turn from considering the poetic form of this work in its main lines, to considering in detail the language, declamation and the musical expression. Only I must content myself here with somewhat dry and sparing suggestions, for the more one penetrates into the real art-work, the more difficult is it not to harm that which is its very essence by the unpliant language of logic.

With regard to the relation between music and language in the new drama, the insight to be obtained is a very simple one ; but it lies so far removed from most of us, that it is not easy to speak on this subject without laying oneself open to the most varied misunderstandings. I shall therefore ask the reader's permission to give a series of quotations from Wagner's writings, the bearing of which on the present theme will perhaps not be at once apparent. A clear grasp of this subject, however, will reward his patience, and what follows later will demonstrate the value of these quotations.

Wagner writes :

i. "The unity of the action is necessitated by its logical connection ; but this can only be set

forth by one means, and this is not time nor space, but expression" (IV, 253).

2. "A content which should necessitate a dual expression, that is to say, an expression by which he who communicates it would have to appeal in turn to the understanding and the emotions, such a content would likewise be but contradictory and discordant.—That expression, which, as a single expression, would also render possible a uniform content, we designate as the one which would most readily be able to communicate the most comprehensive intuition of the poetical intelligence to the emotions" (IV, 246, 247).

3. "Thus, complementing each other in their varied dance, the united sister-arts will, now in unison, now in pairs and again singly, manifest and assert themselves, always following the exigencies of the dramatic action, which alone sets the measure and standard. Now plastic pantomime will lend its ear to the passionate considerations of thought; the determination of arrested thought will shine forth in the immediate expression of gesture; and again music will alone have to give utterance to the outflow of feeling and the tremors of emotion;

and then in a common embrace all three will raise the intention of the drama to immediate and puissant achievement" (III, 187).

4. "The essential foundation of complete artistic expression is language" (IV, 262).

5. "The language of tones is the beginning and end of the language of words" (IV, 114).

6. "The vitalising central point of dramatic expression is the verse-melody of the performer" (IV, 237).

7. "In the art-work of the future quite a different rôle will have to be allotted to music than in modern opera: it can only be allowed to expand fully where it becomes the most puissant, but everywhere else, where, for example, the dramatic language is the most important, music has to become subservient to the latter.—But just music possesses the capability, without becoming entirely silent, to blend with the pungent elements of speech so imperceptibly, that it lets the latter continue almost by itself, giving it nonetheless all the time its support" (III, 189).

From the above remarks we gather the following. In our drama the expression shall and must be a uniform one, that is to say, the

drama itself must act as a uniform expression ; this it accomplishes by the poet making his appeal constantly to the emotions (in other words, he confines himself to the Purely-Human). But since the uniformity referred to does not consist in a formal scheme, but in the communication of a comprehensive poetic intention to the feelings, this communication will have to be as exhaustive as possible and a varied concatenation will result, in that the understanding, the eye and the ear will assert themselves now singly, then in pairs, and again in unison, and this will depend solely on the dramatic action. But only speech can form the foundation to the varied concatenation of artistic expression. Now speech itself sprang from a mere sound, and when—after having traversed all the degrees of thought—it strove to express that which is highest in man, it resolved itself again into music. Therefore if the spoken language forms the essential foundation of dramatic expression, it must nevertheless be conceded that the language of tones is beginning and end, root and kernel, of the language of words, and, in the case of the Word-Tone-Drama, must, in fact, be this ;

and in this way we come to the insight that the vitalising central point is to be found there where the Word-language and the Tone-language are most intimately blended and are fused in the clearest and most convincing expression, that is to say, in the verse-melody of the performing artist. From the realisation of these facts it further results that music—which will never be entirely silent, since it is, as we have seen, the womb in which drama is conceived, and since it is just music which embodies that essential unity of the expression which makes its appeal to our emotions—that music, I say, manifests itself very variously, especially in its relation to speech. And furthermore, this relation is such, that when one of the two main factors of the expression—Word-language and Tone-language—increases in intensity, the other will decrease, and vice versa. To make use of a prosaic, but handy figure: the sum of the expression must always remain the same; therefore, if one of the mediums of expression demands more space, the other must restrict itself, and conversely. All conceivable intermediate degrees are possible; and, as a matter of fact, we find an end-

less number in Wagner's works. But with regard to the language, what has been said should not be erroneously taken to refer to any "beauty" of language or to a more or less rich use of the spoken word. Only the ideal content of language is here meant. It is just at this point that the first serious error arises.

As a rule, little or no attention is paid to the degree in which also the Word-poet's language is continually changing with regard to its ideal content, inasmuch as in his case language plays a double rôle, on the one hand communicating itself to the understanding ; on the other hand, making its appeal—as far as it is possible—to the musical ear. Especially Shakespeare is so rich in this respect, has such a complete scale at his command, starting from the sentence, big with meaning only, to the almost entirely musical phrase, that every translation must be regarded as a desecration of this poet, which robs his words of their accompanying music, and thereby also of their wings which were destined to bear them into the world beyond,—that of the "inner man," the listener of tones. But how much further the Word-Tone-Poet can go ! And that in

either direction. Let us now consider the two extreme cases.

As Wagner has just shown us, music can serve as support also for the thought-weighted element of speech, and, thanks to it, when necessary, a language is applied in the new drama, which in point of compactness, precision and force surpasses everything which the mere Word-poet can attempt. For since speech is now freed from the necessity to make its appeal simultaneously to the reflecting understanding and the sentient ear, and inasmuch as it need no longer concern itself with descriptions and depictings of emotions which are now revealed to us directly through music, it can henceforth confine itself to its own sphere and in it accomplish things incomparable. In narration it can be concise, exceedingly definite in its characterisation and of greatest pregnancy in its emotional expression.

Examples of this shall be given forthwith from "Tristan." Instead of the various factors of the new drama being stunted through their co-operation, as has been foolishly contended, each, on the contrary, acquires full freedom

therein ; and one of the first consequences of the co-operation of music is a consolidation of language.—But music appears as the liberator of speech, not only with regard to the compactness of ideas, but also in such cases where, on the contrary, words evade as much as possible actual ideas, and strive by arousing the musical feeling, as well as by arousing distant associations of ideas, to cross over into that other world which remains closed to the eye and the understanding. The sphere of the Word-poet is here a very limited one, otherwise he will not be “understood.” But now that music informs us quite definitely what is being enacted in the world of emotions, the understanding, and together with it imagination and speech, can abandon itself without hesitation to a truly poetic intoxication. We had seen music redeemed in the drama ; now it is music which redeems us. It undoes the fetters of logic,—the fetters of inevitable consequence. The “exterior man” is now also set free, and can without hindrance make use of that speech which is inspired by highest ecstasy,—though it were but halting interjections without logical sequence.

By a brief reference to such extreme cases, the possibility of an endless number of intermediate degrees should become apparent without having to go any further. But only by quoting examples will the matter become entirely clear, so the reader will permit me to give a few from "Tristan and Isolde."

To begin with, an example of where "the dramatic language becomes the most important factor and music has to become entirely subservient to it."

In no one work could we find a more excellent example than in Isolde's words in the first act : "Mir erkoren—mir verloren."<sup>1</sup> With these words, which Isolde utters "broodingly, her gaze fixedly riveted on Tristan," she gives an exhaustive designation of the entire drama. These words contain the essence of all that is and has been ; as a matter of fact, they also contain the inevitable, only possible future. But this last—as reflected in Isolde's heart—is revealed to us with the most terrible certainty in the few words which follow :

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : "Destined for me—lost to me."

“Tod-geweihtes Haupt! Tod-geweihtes Herz!”<sup>1</sup> (designating at the word “Haupt” Tristan, at the word “Herz” herself). As we see, these sentences consist merely of such words which each one by itself contains an idea, and which also—each taken separately—summon up a definite picture for the imagination. No prepositions, no adjectives. Here the emotions are not dissected for the understanding as in the spoken drama, but overpowering emotion forces speech relentlessly to condense the little which can be said in words into the fewest words possible. But just because these sentences are so sparing in words, they also gain such an incomparable significance. If the poet, however, were not also a musician, he would be quite unable to give them utterance, for they would fail to be understood; whereas they here, and notably through the co-operation of music, become the central point of the drama. At first the music effaces itself before the words; we see how it “blends so imperceptibly with the pungent elements of speech, that it lets the latter continue almost by

<sup>1</sup> Lit.: “Head consecrated to death! Heart consecrated to death!”

itself, giving it nonetheless all the time its support." The orchestra is practically silent, and the words are declaimed so simply and intensely, that they are, so to speak, spoken and not sung, and we understand them with perfect distinctness. But just at this point the most intimate fusion of words and music takes place, and it is just here that the thought which is striving for expression has blended with the emotion which demands a content. Then softly, very softly, music follows step for step the simply declaimed emotion of these words, and from this melody is born the theme on which the whole symphony is built up. "Before our eyes, so to speak, the thought-laden verse, spoken by a dramatic performer, flows into a musical theme" (IV, 237), and we have here in a practical example the proof of what has been said above, namely, "that the vitalising central point of dramatic expression is the verse-melody of the performer."

Another means of attaining a strong effect, both on the understanding and the feelings, occurs where speech appears in the form of alliterative verse. In "Tristan" again we find an example not surpassed in any other

Wagnerian work. This is Tristan's "Oath of Atonement":

*"Tristan's Ehre—  
hochete Treu':  
Tristan's Elend—  
kuhnster Trotz.  
Trug des Herzens;  
Traum der Ahnung  
ew'ger Trauer  
einz'ger Trost,  
Vergessens gut'ger Trank!  
Dich trink ich sonder Wank"*<sup>1</sup>

Ten times the alliteration is sounded on the first letters of Tristan's name, and seven different conceptions are given of the hero's soul, his sufferings and his fate. This sentence is therefore exceptionally rich in ideas, and thanks to the "all-uniting magic power" of the alliterative verse, these ideas are united to a whole, which summons up before our minds the picture of the hero Tristan.

On the other hand, as a typical example of the extremely opposed case, in which the word-language is freed from all laws and in which the tone-language, as the only possible interpreter, reveals to us the meaning of what

<sup>1</sup> Lit.: "Tristan's honour—highest faith: Tristan's misery—most fearless Deceit of the Heart; Dream perceived; Eternal Sorrow's only solace, Oblivion's kindly draught! I drink thee without trembling."

is said, I should like, above all, to refer to Isolde's very last words uttered before her death. Here we have the state of ecstasy to which the tone-poet may also abandon himself without compunction. For here the words are but the last broken utterances of the mind before it resolves itself into the "wafted All of the breath of the universe" ("in des Welt-Atems wehendem All"); and the less logical speech responds to the adequate expression of that which is felt, the more triumphant and definite are the utterances of the tone-language. Instead of music, as before, "blending so imperceptibly with the words that it lets them continue almost by themselves," it now expands to its fullest proportions and dominates supremely the spoken words. Even by its mere dynamic development it often impedes the comprehension of the words; others again it renders almost unrecognisable by a protracted lingering on single syllables, or by the voice carrying on one syllable over several notes. For here the language of words has become "a coloured expression, a merely sounding word-phrase."

As another just as typical, but different, case

of the continuation of speech where it is practically intended to be nothing but an organ, serving as vehicle for the human voice, I would refer to Brangaene's Warning in the second act :

“ Einsam wachend  
in der Nacht,  
wem der Traum  
der Liebe lacht,  
hab' der Einen  
Ruf in Acht,  
die den Schlafern  
Schlimmes ahnt,  
bange zum  
Erwachen mahnt.”<sup>1</sup>

The construction of the sentences in these verses is itself such that even when very clearly declaimed they cannot be easily understood. Furthermore, they are sung by someone stationed at a distance and not visible to the audience, to which is added the fact that the music obliges the separate syllables to be sung on notes which are sustained for a long time, while the orchestra develops its polyphony in generous profusion. The effect of the human voice in this case is practically little more than that of an inarticulate complaint. This mo-

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : “ Lonely watching in the night, he for whom the dream of love laughs, let him heed the cry of her, who premonishes woe for the sleepers, warning them anxiously to awake.”

ment of the drama is the most complete contrast to the "mir erkoren—mir verloren" ("destined for me—lost to me") of Isolde. For although in many cases speech lapses into absolute silence and music has sole control, or only calls on the co-operation of the eye to interpret the drama, we have in this case an example which is still more instructive ; speech, the organ of the understanding, is used, to be sure, but is nothing but the lament of which Wagner writes in his "Beethoven" that "it transfers us into that dream-like state in which that world is revealed whence the musician speaks to us."

I confine myself intentionally to these extreme examples. Lack of space prevents me from attempting here a detailed study of the question, and, moreover, experience has taught me<sup>1</sup> that just in this domain it is almost impossible to avoid a general misunderstanding. With us there prevails such a total lack of artistic instinct, that in speaking of "language" almost everyone thinks merely of philology, and when the word "music" is

<sup>1</sup> Gained on the occasion of previous detailed publications regarding the relation of language and music in the Word-Tone-Drama.

mentioned, of harmony and the science of instrumentation. But I earnestly recommend those few readers who are artistically endowed to pursue this investigation for themselves. The more they reflect on the relation of Word and Tone in Wagner's dramas, the deeper will their insight into the nature of the new artwork become. For it is here that the real wonder is enacted; here is the domain in which we look with one eye into one world and with the other gaze across into the other world. We see how poetry is generated by the spirit of music, and again we recognise how language is the essential foundation of the entire artistic expression; both are the compellers and the compelled, and thereby also it is alone possible for an organic unity to exist. And "*Tristan and Isolde*" is especially suited for an initiation into this subject, because here the entire scale is traversed in a single work. We have seen the extreme end-points; but every sort of intermediate case can be found: the more or less forcible assertion of alliterative verse up to its gradual disappearance and the interchanging use of end-rhymes and assonance will be the first features to strike us; but thereupon it

will be realised that this exterior form corresponds to the inner content of what is said ; we shall realise that at times speech begets an idea with every single word, and at times is nothing but a lamenting cry, and that ideas contained in it vary at every instant ; together with this will come the realisation that music is most intimately blended with this pulsating life of speech, and these two form, in a sense, the two chambers of the same heart, and it is only this realisation which brings a true insight into that uniform expression, which Wagner laid down as the first condition for the realisation of the drama.

In the first portion of these summary considerations regarding "Tristan" we saw in what manner the poet prepares his conceptions for the new drama and recognised, above all, what further significance the term "action" has gained in this case. In the second part I attempted to stimulate a realisation of the intermingling of Word and Tone in the carrying out of the various phases of this action.

Also, with regard to the other works of the second period, similar considerations should prove the most instructive. They lead us to

the kernel of the dramatic, as the only essential thing, and reveal to us the inexhaustible abundance of possibilities which are contained in the Art-Work of the Future.

*The “Meistersinger”*

“Tristan and Isolde” taught us that through the co-operation of the new organ—that is of music—the first essential condition for the life of the drama, action, admits of a profounder conception than heretofore and of a new representation. This realisation will prove of use to us in considering the “Meistersinger.” For although the hero of the piece, Hans Sachs, finds plenty of opportunity of revealing himself to us through word and deed in the rich and coloured life of the “Meistersinger,” the real action, nonetheless,—namely, that which takes place in his soul,—is so deeply interior, that it can be depicted by music alone. The *true* drama, that which the poet wished to represent, comes to pass here only in and through the music.

To begin with, the choice of the subject may somewhat take us aback. For we had heard the teaching: “That which the Word-Tone-Poet

has to express, is the Purely-Human, freed from all convention." And this saying has induced many into the error of supposing that only the mythological and legendary is suitable for the new drama. Now we are greatly indebted to the Word-Tone-Poet for having shown us in the "*Meistersinger*" how warmly and fully the Purely-Human can pulsate also there where we should the least suspect it, that is, in the philistine world of petty burgherdom. This is a new wonder achieved by music and the Word-Tone-Drama. For a dramatist formerly had been practically obliged to choose the courts of kings, or at least of the great ones of the realm, as the background for his drama ; that was his only means of giving sufficient colour to the whole and of finding incidents which would serve to set forth the souls of his heroes and at the same time have a sufficient interest. And if by any chance a rôle was ascribed to the ordinary burgher, it was only by drawing him out of his bourgeois atmosphere and letting him participate in actions of state. Wagner, on the other hand, does not once throughout the whole "*Meistersinger*" abandon the narrow circle of the

petty bourgeoisie, and yet he has succeeded in depicting one of the most splendid figures which have ever trod the stage. And far from the Nuremberg cobbler, Hans Sachs, gaining in importance by the reaction of exterior events, the entire action, just in his case, is completely internal. What Hans Sachs stands for is greatness of soul, and in the "Meistersinger" we witness the final great victory, that of manly and proudly conscious renunciation, and we behold the simple artisan rising to the heights of glorious hero-ship. Not one of the male figures Wagner created surpasses that of Hans Sachs, and perhaps not one can rival it. For Sachs vanquishes even bitterness of heart, and "calm and serene within, achieves the absolute gaiety of gentle and joyful resignation" (Fragments, 105). Side by side flows the life of the gay and chequered outside world. The populace, to be sure, suspecting with certain instinct the greatness of Sachs, acclaims him with delight : but how can it possibly divine the truth ? Those who surround him meet him with indifference, antipathy or with varying degrees of sympathy, often even with admiration, but

without a single one of them perceiving the interior struggle or divining the heroic grandeur of the man. Like every truly great man, he stands alone, absolutely alone,—only the innocent, inexperienced maiden has now and then an inkling of the truth, and as if a flash of lightning had suddenly revealed to her the hidden inner world, her divining gaze penetrates into the heart of the lonely man and she utters a cry of fear and anguish,—only to bask again forthwith “in the sun of her radiant joy,” in obedience to the laws of nature.

Since the true action here is an interior one, it is depicted almost solely by the music, calling in the co-operation of the eye. Only in the quintet, at the moment when all the others are quite sunk in their happiness, Hans Sachs makes a hasty reference to himself :

“ Vor dem kinde lieblich hehr,  
mocht ich gern wohl singen ;  
doch des Herzens süss Beschwer  
galt es zu bezwingen.  
'S war ein schöner Abendtraum ;  
dran zu deuten wag' ich kaum.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : “ Dearly had I wished to sing before the child sublimely sweet, but to subdue the dear distress of my heart was here my duty. 'Twas a fair evening-dream ; to try to interpret it I hardly dare.”

And even in the two great monologues, though we may look deep into his soul, we hear nothing in words of his own complaint. But we continually hear its burden in the music, on the other hand, with ever-growing distinctness, especially in the conversations with Eva, in the accompaniment to the Cobbling Song, in the emotions which the "*Johannisnacht*" arouses in the silent heart of Sachs and which are rising out of the orchestra throughout the second act, but above all in the deeply moving introduction to the third act and the ensuing scenes. What takes place here is of a nature that it does not, so to speak, engage the understanding, for the greatness of Sachs is not revealed in deeds, but in the smallest details of everyday life; and also his struggle for renunciation, the giving up of the last happiness life holds for him—namely, Eva—is not one of those in which the For and Against rend the soul, in which the "*exterior man*" wages a war of extermination with all his senses against the "*inner man*." No, a man like Sachs could never for a moment entertain the idea of wresting the maiden from the youth, or even of struggling to win her. The struggle is entirely

within—*a struggle against his own regrets*. That here is the tragic conflict. Wagner's drama lets us penetrate into the innermost recesses of the human heart, and—just as later in “Parsifal”—the struggle ends with the victory of the hero. He achieves “the absolute gaiety of a gentle and joyful resignation.” “Redemption for the Redeemer!”

That is the drama of the “Meistersinger.” How were it possible for an action such as this to be depicted otherwise than through music? And how could music have realised it on the stage otherwise than by co-operating with word and eye?

The fact that a dramatic conflict can end in victory, is also an achievement due to Wagner's art. Its causes lie deep in the nature of music, the organ of the “inner man.” Wagner had perceived this possibility even before composing the first work of the second period, and had sketched it in a drama which was never worked out and which bore the significant title “Die Sieger” (lit.: “The victors”). This poem, which was taken from the Buddhistic cycle of legends, might be designated as follows: “Through renunciation to salvation.” Every

tragic downfall, that is, the overthrow of any true hero, is caused, as a matter of fact, directly by the inner and only indirectly by the exterior conflict. The conflict lies between the "exterior man," endowed with a strong sensuality, and the "inner man," who in this case asserts himself with exceptional consciousness. There are only two roads to salvation for a nature in which this—otherwise always latent—conflict arises, leading to inward dissension and inevitable tragedy: either the annihilation of the "exterior man" through death, or the triumph of the "inner" over the "exterior man." The Word-Drama could only depict the former case, for the second case reaches a degree where nothing more can be told the understanding nor anything further be shown to the eye; that is to say, without music there was no means whatever of representing this case. The Tone-Drama, on the other hand, can actually depict for us the supreme achievement of man, Victory.

This sublimely great, but invisible, action of the soul, which in itself is free from every outward limitation of time, place, circumstance and so forth, passes in the midst of the

many-coloured world of burgherdom, where everyone has enough to do in pursuit of his own, strictly personal interests :

“ Wahn, wahn !  
Überall wahn ! ”<sup>1</sup>—

and in which only the barrier of convention, which is raised sky-high at every point of the compass, acts as a dam for the cult of the “ ego.” That is at least how the gentle soul of Hans Sachs in its wisdom conceives of the conventional. But since this conventional element is an arbitrary one, the barrier which it opposes to that which is not arbitrary,—that is, to that compulsion which finds its expression in every true talent,—can find no justification whatsoever. The conventional can always obtain only a limited time, for a limited place and for limited conditions. The Purely-Human, on the other hand, is that which, disregarding time and place, signifies what is universal in mankind, what is of true and eternal significance and which flows directly from the divine source. Whenever the conventional acts as a barrier, not to the selfish excesses of the struggle for personal gain,

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : “ Delusion, delusion ! Everywhere delusion ! ”

but against the Purely-Human itself, it can only appear to us despicable and ludicrous.

Now in the Word-Tone-Drama it remains impossible to take the conventional as foundation of the action or to represent it as the inflexible wall against which the hero's will is shattered—as often occurred in the Word-Drama. In this case it is impossible, because music lacks every means of giving expression to what is accidental and conventional in a special sense. On the other hand, there is something which the Tone-Drama can very well achieve, and that is the expression “of the purely-human side of the conventional,”—if I may be allowed to express myself paradoxically. The adherence to conventions, the laying down of laws—with regard to morals, art and so forth—which, given their nature and their origin, can have only a limited value and which are then proclaimed to be divine and irrefutable, the constant mistaking the transitory form for the eternal content,—the proclivity, where all this has its source, is universally human. And this purely-human element of the conventional, its negative element in a sense, is that which is set forth in

the "Meistersinger." That is why it does not appear to us cruel, but ludicrous, and our merriment serves to expose its nullity. Thus it is the comic element which frees us from the conventional and thereby justifies its introduction into the Tone-Drama.

The whole brings us to realise, what in his soul Hans Sachs had already realised, for he does not bitterly condemn the conventions, but perceives through them everywhere the purely-human element, and values it according to its worth, while he himself stands so high above the world which surrounds him, that it can be immaterial to him whether he conforms to its rules or not. However, he does so, because it is only in this way that he can accomplish good. For us, however, it becomes clear that the real dramatic reason here for depicting the conventional was to obtain an insight into this great soul. For, after having laughed so heartily at the expense of the worthy "Meister," Sachs none the less reminds us at the end :

"Verachtet mir die Meister nicht,  
und ehrt mir ihre Kunst!"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lit.: "Look not on the Masters with contempt, and hold their art in honour!"

In this connection it is worth while to make a special point of noticing, after we have recognised the justification from the "Meistersinger" for the introduction of the Conventional and the Comic, that Wagner has hereby opened a new and wide field for comedy.

Whoever wishes to inform himself with regard to the nature of all that is comic and the various aspects thereof, must read the illuminating considerations which Schopenhauer has devoted to this subject. The cause of all laughter is always the incongruous, and the real reason is generally an incongruity between something perceived by the senses or brought before one and that which exists as a logical thought. But in this case we open a new field to comedy; namely, that of the incongruity between the Purely-Human and the artificially accidental. In the really great comedies of an Aristophanes and a Molière—but above all in those of Shakespeare—we are shown the direction of this noblest conception of comedy; but it lay in the nature of the Word-Drama that a narrower convention could always be opposed only by a larger one. But here, where through music we remain in

direct contact with the invisible and primal cause of all things,—with the world of the immutable and eternal, we at once recognise the nullity of the conventional, for we overlook the entire wide chasm which separates the Purely-Human from the Artificial. This, I take it, is the highest attainable form of comedy.

In Plato's "Symposium" Aristodemos, when he awakes early in the morning, finds Socrates busily endeavouring to impress upon Aristophanes that "whoever is a true tragic poet, must also be a true comic poet." Nor does Socrates give way until he has forced Aristophanes to assent; the latter, however, "had not followed the demonstration very well." Socrates, with the whole weight of his penetrating mind, had probably conceived of this relation much more profoundly and especially very differently from his contemporaries, otherwise a man of such intellectual force as Aristophanes would have surely been bound to understand him. His conception of the innermost nature of the tragic and comic, I imagine, was the same as that which, after him, Shakespeare—being himself "the true

tragic poet"—realised, but which can attain its deepest significance as well as absolute clearness only in the Tone-Drama. Perhaps the close relationship between the two great Germanic dramatists, Shakespeare and Wagner, appears nowhere more clearly than in their conception of the comic ; for in the case of both Socrates' words have come true.

It has already been frequently remarked that the poem of the "Meistersinger" has a decidedly Shakespearian flavour ; but this remark is a merely superficial one and reveals us nothing ; and if a wise person were to meet this assertion with the equally profound answer that no Shakespearian work can be brought into comparison with this dramatic poem, we should likewise agree with him and remain just as wise as we were before. For the relationship with Shakespeare only stands forth when the Tone-Drama is performed, the reason being that the purely-human element, that is, everything to which the gay confusion of intrigues is intended to serve as contrast, is expressed through the music, and it is only when the soul of Hans Sachs is clearly revealed to our spirit, that we perceive the

incongruity between it and the surrounding world ; then, and then only, the comedy which the poet had in mind comes to pass.

With regard to the music, and the relation of Word and Tone, I would content myself with referring to what was said when we discussed "*Tristan*." I should like, however, to call the reader's attention to one single other point, which is highly instructive for the technique of the new drama.

For since in the "*Meistersinger*" the conventional element asserts its place very strongly, and since, as we know, there is no necessary immediate relation between it and the world of music, the question arises, how is it to be avoided that music degenerates into that senseless artificiality from which it has just been redeemed ? And how would an artificial dalliance with tones appear when the soul of Hans Sachs keeps continually and unexpectedly breaking through ? At first glance the question seems quite unsolvable. But as a matter of fact the problem was solved in that it never existed as such in the mind of the Word-Tone-Poet.

Here we are able to penetrate very deeply

into his mental workshop. For had Wagner merely left us the poem of the "Meistersinger," we should not have been able to guess what we now are shown in the complete work, namely, that the real drama is a purely-human one which is entirely resolved in music, and that it is just the music which—far from being a difficult problem—is the all-combining element enfolding the entire work. The music, in other words, the soul of Hans Sachs, was the starting-point of the Word-Tone-Poet ; for him it is the beginning and end ; it is, however, also the central point whence the transfiguring tones are poured forth over a superficial and indifferent surrounding world. Consequently the music here appears often to be making actually sport of the characters and their utterances ; and it does so, as a matter of fact. What else, indeed, could it be expected to do with them ? But it is not the music which is arbitrary, which forms a not essential accompaniment—since it is the pulsating heart of the whole organism !—but, on the contrary, the conventional episodes, the prejudices of the burghers of Nuremberg, their disputes, their fisticuffs and their celebrations, constitute the

arbitrary and accidental element. The music is built up with sheer unexampled symphonic and dramatic unity. Even the most obdurate opponents of Wagner admit as much. But what these musicians do not understand, is that this musical unity is a consequence of the genuine, purely-human drama, in so far as, just as the whole action only obtains its true significance from its relation to Hans Sachs, the entire music also owes its origin and meaning to the expression which his soul gives to the world about him. It has even been asserted that the gigantic score was evolved from a single theme. Personally, I never had the curiosity nor the patience to test this assertion. The only controlling factor for the poet was certainly the strict unity and simplicity of his dramatic idea. From it sprang the uniform music, and in the same way as Hans Sachs' great soul embraced and understood everything through love and was able to conform to the existing conventions without ever ceasing to be what it was, the music flows forth from the inmost heart of the dramatic conception—that is, this very soul of Hans Sach—lovingly pervading and enhancing every-

thing, even the smallest and most trivial matters, and in "idealising," in the best sense of the word, the episodes of petty bourgeois existence, it also reveals to us the purely-human element in everything.

If therefore in the "Meistersinger" we find certain relations which recall the former opera, it is just by these that we can most clearly perceive what an unbridgable chasm divides Wagner's drama from opera. This difference we can always again best sum up when we say, that Wagner has liberated music. In this case also we see it hold supreme sway. The dramatic expression which it gave to the souls of the main characters, expands from this point and embraces all other and superficial episodes. Instead of a series of separated or loosely connected pieces of music, which are only combined to a whole by the superficial requirement of a logical sequence of events, as in opera, we have here an absolute musical unity, which constitutes the point of departure and which, in laying bare to us the soul of a visible person, grows to a dramatic unity which reveals to us the changing events of the invisible soul, but which furthermore, owing to

the fact that the invisible events which come to pass in the soul are closely connected with visible occurrences, acquires the power of embracing the entire visible world and to endow things with music, which otherwise could only come thereby arbitrarily.

With the reader's permission, I shall make a short and concise recapitulation of the suggestions resulting from the above considerations on the "Meistersinger." This work teaches us that :

1. The Purely-Human can be found everywhere; the limits imposed on the Word-Tone-Drama are interior, and not exterior ones.

2. Even more so than in "Tristan and Isolde," the true action here is an entirely inward one. The events of the outer world offer an opportunity for the souls of showing how they act and think in certain cases. But what they really are and what passes in their innermost depths—that is, the real drama—is only revealed to us through music.

3. In Hans Sachs' soul the struggle leads to victory. The depicting of victory is an acquisition of the Tone-Drama.

4. Even in the conventional we can find purely-human aspects.

5. The incongruity between the purely-human element, now finding its direct expression through music, and the conventional element, occurring as in the former drama, opens up a new field to comedy.

6. Music is the element in which the strictly uniform action has its being, and as such it constitutes the connecting tissue of the entire work.

7. In so far as music applies to the soul-life of the principal characters, it gives an ideal colouring to the superficial surroundings which can appear only exteriorly artificial, finding, on the contrary, its most absolute justification in the fact that it shows all events and occurrences reflected in these very souls and thus furthers continually and exclusively the only true dramatic action.

8. From this we see that the musically strictly uniform construction of the Wagnerian scores (including the so-called "Motifs") is not due to a formal decision of musical judgment, but grows out of the unity of the poetic and dramatic conception of the action.

9. From the realisation of these various points, we are brought to recognise that there is no relationship whatever between Wagner's Word-Tone-Drama and opera in the ordinary sense ; unless perchance we put them side by side, so as to show that in each and every point they are diametrically opposed.

*The "Ring der Nibelungen."*

Richard Wagner undertook twice to dramatise this cycle of legends. The first time shortly before the turning-point of the year 1848, the second time after having completed the essays in which he had acquired full and clear consciousness, that is, in the year 1852. Nothing can show us so distinctly the real difference of the new dramatic form as a comparison between the two treatments of the same subject ; at the same time nothing can reveal to us so clearly and distinctly what in the second treatment of the "Ring der Nibelungen" constitutes the real drama.

The first version—"Des Nibelungen-Mythus, als Entwurf zu einem Drama"<sup>1</sup>—the reader will find in the second volume of the

<sup>1</sup> "The Nibelungen-Myth, a sketch for a drama."

collected works. This sketch embraces exactly the same subject-matter as the later "*Ring der Nibelungen*": it starts with Alberich's rays of the gold, out of which he forges the Ring, and ends with the death of Siegfried and Brünnhilde. The sequence of events is also the same in its main lines. And yet the two works are fundamentally different; the first sketch is more or less an attempt, an effort of genius, to dramatise the *Nibelungen-Myth* as it appears in the "*Edda*"; in the second sketch we find that transferring of the real action to within, which we already found in "*Tristan and Isolde*" and in the "*Meistersinger*," and which constitutes the most important foundation of the Word-Tone-Drama,—consequently this second sketch denotes an entirely new work, having only its general setting in common with the first version and with the old German legends.

In order to make this relation entirely clear, I shall now, omitting all secondary details, refer to the main points which differentiate the first version so strongly from the second:

1. Nowhere in the first version is there mention of a "*Curse on Love*." The fact that

only he who has "renounced love can force the gold into a ring" Wagner himself denoted later as "the generative theme up to Siegfried's death." This generative theme, the real foundation of the whole drama in the "Ring," is lacking in the first version.

2. Consequently the conflict between Love and Gold is also lacking. None of the scenes in which this finds expression exists, for example, the Freia-Compact; the giants demanded at once the treasure and not Freia. Neither does Fafner slay Fasolt, but both continue to live and give the treasure into the custody of a dragon. Also in the "*Götterdämmerung*" Brünnhilde is not admonished to return the ring to the Rhine-daughters.

3. Wotan is indeed often appealed to as the supreme power among the gods, but does not step into the foreground as main personage of the drama, rather the collective idea of "the gods" is opposed to that of "the giants" and "the dwarfs." As a result, of all the big Wotan scenes, we only find the punishment of Brünnhilde and the Fire-charm at the end of the "*Walküre*"; not one of the others—Wotan and Mime, Wotan and Alberich, Wotan

and Erda, Wotan, and Siegfried—occurs. Moreover, the scenes of the Norns and of Waltraute, which in the “*Götterdämmerung*” refer exclusively to the now invisible Wotan, are mere narrations in the first version.

4. The fault of the gods is that “the Nibelungs remain underyoked” and that “Alberich is not robbed of his supreme power for a higher purpose; hence Alberich’s plea against the gods is well founded.”

5. When through Siegfried’s death and the return of the gold to the Rhine-daughters this fault is atoned for, the gods are reinstated in their former splendour and might: “One alone shall rule: All-Father! Glorious one—thou!”

6. In an apotheosis we see Brünnhilde, who has once more become a Valkyrie, clad in sparkling armour, accompanying Siegfried through the clouds to bring him to the gods as “pledge for their eternal power.”

Having pointed out these far-reaching differences, there is hardly any need for calling attention to the many characteristic details, for example, that Siegmund has a wife, that Siegfried forges his sword “under Mime’s

direction," that it is only Siegfried who slays Hunding, and so forth.

This first sketch bears still clearly the stamp of the period before the nature of the new drama was definitely realised. However much the concentration of the epic subject-matter into a commensurate action may seem to betoken the work of genius, it cannot be denied that this sketch answers the requirements of the true Word-Tone-Drama less than, for example, "*Tannhäuser*." It may even appear doubtful whether Wagner would have chosen this subject at all later on ; in any case his handling of the epic poems of "*Tristan*" and "*Parsifal*" lead us to suppose that his treatment would have been a different one from the very outset. As a matter of fact, he has also in his second version kept the epic proportions ; he has not changed the setting, and thereby he has given us a work which differs just as much from "*Tristan*" as from the "*Meistersinger*," and which may be regarded as the type of a third form which is open to treatment by the Word-Tone-Poet. But what has the poet done so as to transform the first sketch into a purely-human drama in which

music has its true task allotted to it? The exterior sequence of events has remained almost unchanged, but the real drama has been transferred entirely to within, into the depths of the human soul. The true action is no longer the sequence of episodes and adventures which is broadly treated in the epic, but the invisible, interior development. This eternal factor—in contradistinction to the transitory factors of what is said and seen—is expressed by music; in other words, music again assumes the rôle, which, as the highest of the arts and as mother of the drama, is due to it.

How has this been brought about by the poet?

In the first place, by showing us the impelling and generative motive of the whole drama, instead of mere ambition and rivalry, the inner conflict between the striving for power and the yearning for love: only he who renounces love, can govern the world. Secondly, by concentrating this conflict (which takes a different form in each of the principal characters) in the soul of a single personage, who stands high above all the rest. In Wotan's

noble and mighty soul this conflict acquires universal significance and leads to the destruction of a world-system. The conflict between the striving after power and the yearning for love in the soul of Wotan,—this constitutes now the action in the “Ring der Nibelungen.” The drama begins with a dream of “eternal power”; it ends with the burning of Walhalla: “Ruhe, ruhe! du Gott!” (lit. : “Rest, rest, thou God!”)

It must, however, be conceded that in this case the interior construction, in accordance with the exterior plan, is a much more complicated one than in the other dramas. For this reason also every study devoted to it will prove to be especially productive, both for acquiring a better realisation of the nature of the Tone-Drama in general, as also for a deeper insight into this particular drama. The following remarks are intended to stimulate in this sense.

It should be noticed that in the “Rheingold,” where the symbol which serves to reveal Wotan’s soul is first created, that is to say, where “the elements of action, emotion and expression which are perceptible by the under-

standing" are to be "condensed to a point which is the most perceptible possible for the emotions," it should be noticed, I say, that here Wotan hardly leaves the stage and is clearly represented as the central point of all that occurs and all that results therefrom. Many deeds of grave import are enacted by himself, but—which is much more important—everything that happens converges in him without exception and only acquires life, form and meaning with regard to the whole through the impression it leaves on his soul.—In the "Walküre" Wotan is still the chief personage of the action, in the old sense of the word. Of all the characters he remains on the stage the longest and still accomplishes decisive acts, but almost half the drama is taken up with actions in which, though they all, in fact, originate from and react upon him, he is personally only indirectly concerned.—In "Siegfried" Wotan appears only once in each act, his influence on events being merely indirect. The hero of the action, Siegfried, neither knows him, nor has any knowledge of him.—In the "Götterdämmerung" we only see Wotan once at the end when the castle of the gods flames up in the

skies ; and only once he actually participates in the action, namely, when Waltraute entreats Brünnhilde to return the ring to the Rhine-daughters, and tells her how “ Walvater stumm und ernst auf hehrem Sitz ”<sup>1</sup> awaits the end. But neither the Gibichungs nor Siegfried suspect that there is any link between their destinies and that of Wotan.—Thus in the course of the Tetralogy Wotan moves further and further from our sight ; but let this not mislead anyone : not only does he remain the centre of the drama, but the more the action develops, the more does it gain in significance and meaning in his soul alone.

Let us follow the action throughout the four dramas.

In the “ *Rheingold*,” where Wotan appears as the leading character, others appear almost similar in importance—Alberich, the Rhine-daughters, the Giants, Loge and so forth—and it is only little by little that we realise the significance of Wotan as the central figure on which all the light is concentrated. Only

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : “ Walvater (Wotan) grave and silent on his holy seat.”

through him everything obtains significance ; it is only when Wotan puts the Ring on his finger that a conflict arises, for Alberich had renounced love of his own free will ; Alberich's curse is heard (with the exception of Loge, who does not participate in what follows) only by Wotan, no one else having knowledge of the curse which is attached to the Ring ; the complaint of the Rhine-daughters is addressed to Wotan ; it is for Wotan that Erda utters her warning.

In the course of the "*Walküre*," however, we see that the fate of all the characters concerned in the action reposes in his hands,—not because of his omnipotence and supreme control, but because the struggles of the human beings which are depicted and the participation of superhuman influences (Fricka and Brünnhilde) are all but the reflex of his own soul-struggle ; they are his deeds, begotten of him. It is only with reference to him that the love of Siegmund and Sieglinde, Siegmund's combat with Hunding, Fricka's defence of morality, Brünnhilde's protection of Siegmund, and so on, are imbued with meaning. And here already the tragic conflict in the heart of

Wotan leads to a first renunciation ; he gives his blessing to the Nibelung offspring :

“ Was tief mich ekelt,  
dir geb ich's zum Erbe,  
der Gottheit nichtigen Glanz ! ”<sup>1</sup>

But now Brünnhilde participates in the march of events. Brünnhilde is the living and youthful impersonation of her father's will ; she is Wotan in female form, and henceforth she carries out Wotan's thought, but with all the directness of the woman who is controlled, not by her intellect, but by her feelings. Brünnhilde says :

“ Zu Wotan's Willen sprichst du,  
sagst du mir was du willst,”<sup>2</sup>

And Wotan replies :

“ Mit mir nur rat' ich,  
red' ich zu dir.”<sup>3</sup>

But without indulging in any subtleties,—which, by the way, are quite justifiable in this case—I should like to point out that in the

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : “ What deeply disgusts me I give thee as heritage,—the empty splendour of godship ! ”

<sup>2</sup> Lit. : “ It is to Wotan's will you are speaking when you tell me your desires.”

<sup>3</sup> Lit. : “ It is only with my own self I take counsel when I speak with you.”

scene from which these words are quoted Brünnhilde becomes before our eyes the only confidant of Wotan's "thought"<sup>1</sup> and accordingly also the one who must carry it on. No one knows, no one suspects what is passing in Wotan's soul. He stands there just as lonely as Hans Sachs. Moreover, no one can comprehend him, otherwise he would have been able to realise his cherished dream,—the "new scheme of things entire":

"Was keinem in Worten ich künde,  
unausgesprochen  
bleibe es ewig!"<sup>2</sup>

But just as Eva, the maiden, was the only one who could catch a glimpse of Hans Sachs' soul, so here also the maiden Brünnhilde is the only being in whom Wotan can confide, and, furthermore, she is his own flesh and blood, his reincarnated self.

A few remarks concerning the "narration" in all Wagner's works seem here in place.

It is just these narrations which have often,

<sup>1</sup> Wotan's "thought" is his plan of creating a new world system from which power and love shall no longer exclude each other.

<sup>2</sup> Lit.: "What in words I reveal to none, may it ever remain unuttered."

but unjustly, been considered undramatic by professional persons. For what holds true of the spoken drama, does not obtain for Wagner's drama. Thanks to the co-operation of music, Wagner's narratives have acquired a new and formerly undreamt-of significance. An apparently superficial trait will suffice to emphasise the difference. In the antique drama it is the "messengers" which contribute the narratives; in Wagner we find them given only to the principal characters. Only once he introduces a messenger; namely, Waltraute in the "*Götterdämmerung*." But Waltraute is Wotan's daughter, she appears as the representative of Wotan and serves to reflect accurately what is passing in Wotan's soul. In the former tragedies the narratives referred to events of which we had to be informed in order to understand the connection of the dramatic action; it is here a question of exterior and visible events. On the other hand, in the Word-Tone-Drama the facts related in the narratives are often well-known to us, and where this is not the case, the interest reposes less in their communication than on the impression which they produce on the mind of

the narrator. This is especially and obviously the case in the “Ring.” We have Wotan’s big narrative in the “Walküre”; in “Siegfried” each of the three acts gives us a narration from Wotan (in the form of a dialogue); in the “Götterdämmerung” his series of narrations is continued by the scene of the Norns and by Waltraute’s narrative; and in every case the same actions are recounted, actions of which the most important was shown us in the “Rheingold.” Here the poet’s intention is as delicate as it is admirable: in the mind of his hero his past actions and everything which resulted therefrom and bore fruit is variously reflected in the different phases of his life and destiny; to this the narrations are intended to bear direct testimony. Since the real action is an interior one, it does not suffice that we know merely what has happened, but we must actually feel in what way that which has occurred will continue to react and bear fruit as an influence of the present. Nowhere is the magic power of music so marvellously revealed as here. For, thanks to its co-operation, the exact nature of the picture left by anterior events on the mind is brought home to us with

almost mathematical precision ; certain things almost vanish, leaving hardly as much as their shadow behind, while others grow and expand, either as impressions of terror, or are enhanced and transfigured to radiant visions. Thus the past does not remain a dead letter, but lives on, eternally the same and yet eternally new, in accordance with the changing phases of time.

No wonder that, in a letter to Liszt, Wagner describes Wotan's revelation of destiny to Brünnhilde as "the most important scene for the development of the entire great four-act drama." For it simultaneously depicts the first tragic climax in Wotan's inner life and the "dénouement" by which the actual continuation of Wotan's thought is transferred into the hands of Brünnhilde. It is therefore logically entirely consistent that in place of Wotan Brünnhilde now becomes the leading figure on the stage ; none the less, Wotan remains as much as ever the centre of the whole drama, but his will, his dream of a new order of things, have now become definitely and visibly impersonated in the person of Brünnhilde. In the farewell scene at the end of the "Walküre," however, that transposition of

the drama from without to within, which we at first observed in "Tristan," actually takes place before our eyes: the "unhappy Immortal" ("unselige Ewige") here renounces his own will; with his own hands he closes the eyes whence his "yearning hope" ("Hoffnungs-Sehnen"), his "desire for bliss of worlds" ("Wunsch nach Weltenwonne"), shines forth on him; he bids an eternal farewell to the one being to whom his "thought" was known and who could have realised his will in actual deed.

When Wagner composed the poem of the "Ring" he was not as yet acquainted with Schopenhauer, and no one is more averse than I am to reading a philosophic construction into works of art; yet it were certainly difficult to find a better designation for Wotan's state of mind than to say: it is a condition of the negation of the will to live ("Verneinung des Willens zum Leben"). The negation of the will is no philosophical revelation of reason, to be sure, but a moral action which takes place in the inner being whose sphere lies beyond the confines of logic. This negation can, of course, be a result of philosophical reflection, as in the

case of the thinker, but it can also be brought about by other causes, as we may observe in the case of saints, or as here with Wotan. Schopenhauer himself even says that it is in this way that "most people reach the negation of the will, since it is the decree of fate and that which is undergone personally, and not the mere realisation of suffering, which most frequently conduces to complete resignation." And I may add at once that Wotan has formed his resolution so instinctively, so impulsively and so little philosophically,—

"Eines nur will ich noch,  
das Ende—  
das Ende!—"<sup>1</sup>

—that he only carries out his negation inconsequentially and with a certain lack of conviction, again and again participating actively in the course of events.

"Zu schauen kam ich,  
nicht zu schaffen,"<sup>2</sup>

Wotan remarks in "Siegfried"; and, as a matter of fact, we are ourselves in a certain sense transferred into Wotan's soul and behold with

<sup>1</sup> Lit.: "Only one thing I desire, the End!—the End!"

<sup>2</sup> Lit.: "I came to behold, not to act."

his eyes the continuation of an action, which, when all is said and done, has received its initial impulse from his world-dream, but which, freed from the original impelling will, now continues to evolve independently. Wotan's heart delights in the happy, child-like hero, who knows no envy, and in the scene with Erda we reach the second climax of the real action, that is, of the drama in Wotan's soul, inasmuch as the god solemnly renews his resolution of absolute renunciation, no longer with bitterness, but with a serene joyfulness—in other words, a genuine negation of the will :

“ Was in der Zwiespalts wildem Schmerze  
verzweifelnd einst ich beschloss,  
froh und freudig  
führe frei ich nun aus ! ”<sup>1</sup>

This first negation is comparable with that of Tristan, the second with that of Hans Sachs. But here also, just as in the second act of the “ Walküre,” a “ dénouement ” is immediately connected with the climax and leads to a new series of tragic events. For, as has been said, Wotan's negation of the will is by no means a

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : “ What in the wild torments of my inward conflict I decided in my despair, that I now freely carry out with gladness and joy.”

philosophical, but a purely impulsive act. Even in the very negation the will was the dominating factor in his case. This negation is not, as in the case of saints and thinkers, a resignation, but a position "not-willing"; it is his will, not to will (*nolo = non volo*). And that is why this negative will breaks itself against the rocks on all sides. When he renounced his will for the first time, Brünnhilde took it over into her noble and passionate heart, and instead of acting in accordance with true negation and allowing things to take their course, Wotan saw in Brünnhilde's act a revival of his own "thought," of his own will which he had just renounced, and proceeded to act with inflexible severity towards his own self; this dearly loved second "ego" of his he transferred to a barren rock into an eternal sleep (as he thought), and turned his back thereon for ever. But now, after having "with joy given way to eternal youth," he is seized with fear of what his own re-awakened will, namely Brünnhilde awakened by Siegfried, will accomplish; he must at all costs prevent Siegfried from awaking her,—"this road thou shalt not go!"; but the victorious sword

shatters the eternal spear, “the pledge of dominion” (“der Herrschaft Haft”). He could not stay Siegfried, for the latter is the reincarnated force of his own youth ; but he erred no less when he announced to Erda touching Brünnhilde :

“ Wachend wirkt  
dein wissendes kind  
erlosende Weltentat.”<sup>1</sup>

True, Brünnhilde, when she is awoken by Siegfried from her long sleep, at once takes up Wotan’s thought again as the object of her striving :

“ O Siegfried ! Siegfried !  
siegendes Licht !  
dich liebt’ ich immer ;  
denn mir allein  
erdünkte Wotan’s Gedanke.”<sup>2</sup>

However, before she can accomplish the redeeming world-deed, Siegfried’s love has quite taken possession of her heart. “Love thyself and leave me !” she cries out to him ; but he breaks down her resistance just as easily as a little while earlier he broke down Wotan’s resistance. This tragic outcome is also due to

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : “ Thy child, who knows, wakes and works a redeeming world-deed.”

<sup>2</sup> Lit. : “ O Siegfried ! Siegfried ! Conquering Light ! Thee have I ever loved ; for to me alone Wotan’s thought was revealed.”

Wotan's fault. He had deprived his child, his reincarnated "thought," of her divinity—"so kehrt sich der Gott dir ab; so küsst er die Gottheit von dir!"<sup>1</sup>—and if she were ever to awake again, it was only to be to human love:

"Du folgstest selig  
der Liebe Macht:  
folge nun dem,  
den du lieben musst!"<sup>2</sup>

But with her maidenhood Brünnhilde loses "the divine knowledge" and also forfeits her strength:

"Des Wissens bar—  
doch des Wunscher voll,  
an Liebe reich—  
doch ledig der Kraft!"<sup>3</sup>

She is no longer Wotan's will, but Siegfried's mate—"in his power he holds the maiden"—his wish is henceforth her law and "in the highest ecstasy of love" she cried:

"Fahr' hin Wallhall's  
leuchtende Welt!  
Götter-dämmerung,  
dunkle herauf!"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lit.: "Thus the god turns from thee; thus he kisses thy divinity from thee!"

<sup>2</sup> Lit.: "Thou didst abandon thyself blissfully to the power of love, follow now him whom thou must love!"

<sup>3</sup> Lit.: "Bare of knowledge,—but filled with desire, rich in love,—but shorn of strength."

<sup>4</sup> Lit.: "Farewell Walhalla's glittering world! Dusk of the Gods, cast up thy shadows!"

The fact that the last of the four great dramas now bears the title of "Götterdämmerung" (lit.: "Dusk or Twilight of the Gods"),—instead of, as in the first sketch, being named "Siegfried's Tod" ("Siegfried's Death")—clearly denotes that also here the true action is that which passes in Wotan's now silent soul. In the scene of the Norns and in that of Waltraute's narrative the picture of the god is summoned up before our mind's eye, how he "sits grave and silent on his holy seat," how "his glance is broken when he thinks of thee, Brünnhilde!", how he awaits his ravens:

"Kehrten die cinst  
mit guter Kunde Zurück,  
dann noch einmal  
—zum letztenmal—  
lächelte ewig der Gott."<sup>1</sup>

—and the music now reveals to us the soul of the hero, who has ceased to appear on the stage, with an intensity and a convincing power which defy all description. Meanwhile the sequence of events is concentrated on Wotan's child, on his second "ego," which,

<sup>1</sup> Lit.: "Should they ever return with good tidings, then once more—for the last time—a divine smile would illumine the face of the god."

deprived henceforth of its divinity and of its divine knowledge, is abandoned to the most miserable of fates ; all, however, a direct result of Wotan's acts, for Siegfried's foe, Hagen, who causes his infidelity to Brünnhilde and brings about his death, acts at the bidding of his father Alberich, from whom Wotan wrested the Ring. In order that this dramatic connection, which points exclusively to Wotan, may stand forth clearly, Alberich in the second act appears to Hagen in his dream, and the Rhine-daughters in the third act lament the loss of the gold. Through Siegfried's death Brünnhilde again regains her knowledge and is able to accomplish the redeeming act, that is, "to let the end of the gods break in for ever."

" Mich—musste  
der Reinsten verraten,  
dass wissend würde ein Weib ! " <sup>1</sup>

In these words the exterior action of the fourth drama is summed up. Brünnhilde accomplishes the will of Wotan ; not the first heroic plan of world-conquest, but the negation of his will—"the End, the End!" ; she

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : " Me—the purest of men had to betray, that a woman might gain knowledge ! " " wissend " = knowing.

returns the Ring to the Rhine-daughters. Now will and thought have become one ; the inner struggle is at an end ; the last hero is dead, and Brünnhilde also can now only desire death.

“ Weiss ich nun, was dir frommt ?  
 Alles ! Alles !  
 Alles weiss ich :  
 Alles ward mir nun frei !  
  
 Ruhe, ruhe, du Gott ! ”<sup>1</sup>

And now, when Siegfried, Brünnhilde, Hagen and all the rest have disappeared, we once more see the hero of this great tragedy, Wotan, in Heaven, “ once more—for the last time——” we see “ his smile eternal,” the while the gods, Walhalla, and he himself are consumed by the flames of the World-Ashtree. Again the music reveals to us Wotan’s soul : what it tells us here Wagner himself once tried to indicate :

“ Alles Ew’gen  
 Sel’ges Ende,  
 wisst Ihr, wie ich’s gewann ?  
 Trauernder Liebe  
 tiefstes Leiden  
 Schloss die Augen mir auf :  
 enden sali ich die Welt.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : “ Do I now know what thy need is ? All ! All ! All is known to me : everything has now been revealed to me ! . . . Rest, rest, thou God ! ”

<sup>2</sup> Lit. : “ The blissful end of all that was eternal, know ye how I achieved it ? The deepest suffering of sorrowing love opened my eyes : I saw the world sink to its end.”

The process I have employed in this exposition is one-sided and fragmentary<sup>1</sup>; my object was simply to point out that the "Ring" is the tragedy of Wotan; for the realisation of this fact is the first and essential basis for any comprehension and appreciation of this gigantic work. And when we glance back from this point of view to the first sketch, we realise how great a distance Wagner has progressed in this brief space of time. But if, on the other hand, we then turn to the theatres of our day, we shall perceive nowhere as clearly as by their treatment of the "Ring" that they have not even accomplished the first step towards covering this distance, and that they and their public maintain an attitude of complete incomprehension towards Wagner's Word-Tone-Drama.

In this case the attitude of incomprehension referred to is even extraordinarily instructive in its way. For example, we find everywhere separate parts of the "Ring" being performed; in other words, disconnected fragments of an action. Now if the "Ring" is not the tragedy

<sup>1</sup> I shall, moreover, in the course of this chapter treat this same subject from another point of view.

of Wotan, there is also no reason why this should not be done. We can regard the rest as separate episodes from the "Edda," which have been given a dramatic setting. What is the connection of Siegmund and Sieglinde on one hand, and Alberich and the Rhine-daughters on the other? Or between the Gibichungs and the Wälsungs? The only hitch is, that in adopting this point of view, we find Wotan everywhere very much in the way; we can't conceive what his object is and why he is perpetually intruding; but, above all, he is terribly *undramatic*! And with admirable logic, all that is possible is done so as to eliminate him altogether if possible. "Rheingold" is left out to begin with; in the "Walküre" the scene between Wotan and Fricka is reduced to an incomprehensible minimum, and the first climax of the drama, which follows after, is cut down by a half; the same treatment is allotted to the Wanderer in the first act of "Siegfried," and if it is at all feasible, he is cut out altogether in the second and third acts; in the "Götterdämmerung" the scene of the Norns exists on hardly any stage, and Waltraute is frequently omitted altogether—

The old joke of the travelling troupe which gave a performance of "Hamlet" omitting Hamlet himself, has thus been actually realised in the leading German theatres. I confess that I take a certain pleasure in this proceeding, as it ought to contribute much to the final realisation of Wagner's significance as a dramatist. For if Wagner's works are operas, they are bad operas, and the "Ring" is nothing less than a monstrosity. Already in 1876 a reputed critic advised cutting down and arranging the entire "Ring" to the proportions of a single evening's entertainment, the idea being that the so-called "lyrical gems" strung together would make a very pleasing opera. Whether the opera would really be so pleasing is a question, but the idea in itself is entirely logical. If we add to this the second assertion, which we already met with in connection with "Tristan" and shall again encounter with "Parsifal," namely, that just what Wagner had conceived of as the most moving part of the action, everything, that is, which passes in the innermost soul,—the assertion that this is "undramatic," we shall have penetrated very near to the kernel of the

matter, much nearer than by indulging in a blind enthusiasm for music.<sup>1</sup> For here poet and critic are diametrically opposed to each other. A nearer consideration of this point will be found to be worth while.

The critic does not trouble himself with Wagner's life and development ; he does not attempt first of all to understand where the significance of Wagner lies, nor what his endowment was ; still less does he try to comprehend and assimilate his ideas touching the innermost nature of music and the new form of drama. Such a proceeding forsooth would be termed "uncritical." He places himself, on the contrary, on a so-called objective standpoint, and his conscience and morality consist in the fact that no power in the world can dislodge him from this "objective standpoint." From this position he maintains that : when music is heard on the stage the work in question is an opera ; in an opera the music is sufficient purpose unto itself, all else being only justified inasmuch as it provides occasion for making music ; music is an exclusively sensual pleasure, a feast for the ears, or—as

<sup>1</sup> "Musikschwärmerei."

"the wittiest of all living musical critics" has it—"sounding arabesques." These three assertions Wagner meets with the three following:

1. "I write no more operas: since I do not wish to invent an arbitrary name for my works, I call them dramas, this designation at least serving to express most clearly the standpoint which must be taken so as to receive that which I have to offer" (IV, 417).
2. "The error in the operatic form of art consisted herein, namely, that a medium of expression (music) had been made the object, and that the object to be expressed (the drama) had, on the contrary, become the medium" (III, 282).
3. "An entirely new conception of the nature of music could have been derived from Beethoven" (VIII, 317); "this symphony must appear to us as nothing short of a revelation from another world; and, in fact, it reveals to us a relation of the world's phenomena, entirely different from their usual logical relation, which forces itself upon us with the most overwhelming conviction and controls our feelings with such unerringness, that reasoning logic is entirely confused and disarmed thereby, . . . this modern development of music has responded to

a deep, inner need of humanity" (VII, 149, 150). As we see, assertion here meets assertion, and, when all is said, only one question remains—and not several—namely, the question with regard to the inner nature of music.

Is music a play of "arabesques of sound," or is music "a revelation from another world"? For if music can really never be anything else but "arabesques of sound," then Wagner's whole art goes by the board. His drama bases itself on the assumption that music can speak to us as the revelation from another world, and that we shall consequently be able to go further with the help of music than with the language of the understanding and with the eye; music is therefore with him a medium of dramatic expression, serving a dramatic purpose, notably as the chief factor in its realisation. It is certain, however, that it is impossible to enter into a logical argument touching this point. For if I have the "overwhelming conviction" that a certain music reveals another world to me, that it establishes an immediate contact between my own invisible ego, i.e. that part of man which lies beyond reasoning logic, with the invisible,

indefinable, innermost soul of the whole universe, no one can logically prove that I do not feel this ; but it is just as impossible for me to prove to him that this music reveals anything to me. But he to whom music reveals nothing can only take pleasure in those fragments of Wagnerian works, in which the music is, in a certain sense, most superficial, where, for example, it gives expression to a quite general, indefinite lyrical emotion, or where it appears in the form of dance or song ; but the more the music has to do with the revelation of that invisible world, the more it speaks with precision and "overwhelming conviction," the less will it be understood by such a person. This must be perfectly obvious. And this bears directly on the often-voiced complaint about Wagner's works being "undramatic." It will not be lightly denied that the most intense and moving action is that which passes in the innermost soul ; visible deeds are often but symptoms of what is passing invisibly in the soul. But it is denied that this action can be represented otherwise than by means of words and visible deeds. Every time, therefore, that Wagner, after having bound down

the "exterior man" through his understanding and vision, has shown him the definite direction he is to take, and now descends into the depths of the invisible soul in order to reveal to us by means of music the true action which is being enacted there,—we are told: "that is undramatic." But it can only appear undramatic to one who, for the good reason that music reveals nothing to him, really does not perceive the action. It can be maintained with mathematical precision that the more generally a passage of the "Ring" is cut out, the more essential is the dramatic element which, according to the poet's intention, it contains. The same thing which Wagner noted with regard to "Tannhäuser" obtains of the "Ring," "the drama is set aside as superfluous, . . . its success reposes merely on the pleasure derived from lyrical details." But the result of this is that, under cover of Wagner's name, real enormities are being more and more perpetrated on the stage.

• I have purposely brought out these points here, as I believe that such a practical example as the fate of the "Ring" on all the stages of

the world should help friend and foe alike to get a clear perception of what the essential question is in the case of the Art-Work of the Future.

If we now turn to the realisation in Word and Tone, I would refer, to begin with, touching the use of alliterative verse, to Wagner's explanations in "*Opera and Drama*," Volume IV. I might simply transcribe them, and content myself with reminding the reader that he speaks of this verse-form as nothing less than "an all-embracing and all-combining miracle" which "is able to connect the most remote feelings, and causes them to be embraced by the emotions as akin and purely-human." And with regard to the relation of Word and Tone in general, I would ask the reader to recall what was said in reference to "*Tristan*."

I should like, however, to call attention to a special feature in this relationship, as it will help us towards acquiring an ever-clearer conception of the drama; only we must not put a too narrow and pedantic construction on what is meant.

If we take a general view of the "*Ring*," we shall notice that the relation between the

logical language of words and the revealing language of tones varies in the four parts of which the work consists. As we know, it is not a question of the quantity of words, but of their content and the import which is given to them in an actual performance ; on the other hand, in the case of music it is a question of the intensity of expression. I would remind the reader of Isolde's " *Mir erkoren—mir verloren,*" where the music was a hardly audible accompaniment of the spoken words, and of her death, where the words were uttered, broken and disjointed, while the music with triumphant clearness gave expression to all that was inexpressible. If we now take a comprehensive view of the " *Ring,*" we shall find that nearly throughout the " *Rheingold* " an almost preponderant rôle is given to speech as the dramatic medium of expression, whereas in the " *Walküre* " music asserts itself with greater independence, both in a lyrical as also in a dramatic sense, but interchanging with scenes in which speech has still the more important function to fulfil and in which, if I may be permitted the expression, Word and Tone wrestle together. " *Siegfried,*" at least

in its first two acts, might well appear as that among all Wagner's works where an absolute balance between Word and Tone is maintained,—for which reason I also hold that in a certain sense it can pass for his classical work. "*Götterdämmerung*" is a gigantic symphony; it consists almost throughout of "absolute music,"—that is, in the dramatic sense in which this term should, according to Wagner, be employed. I repeat that, in order that this relation may be recognised, we must not allow certain passages, which seem to contradict what has just been said, to mislead us, and it is obvious that here as everywhere in so vital and supple an organism, the various factors will also and at every moment contribute in a different degree to the dramatic expression; it is here a question of the general impression. And this interchangeable relationship of the mediums of expression is so intimately connected with the development of the action, that each one contributes to the understanding of the other. In the following I shall, in order to explain what has been said, constantly have to refer to the action, and the detail of the working out will initiate us much

more deeply into what before was only suggested.

The truth of my assertion is most clearly set forth in the case of "Rheingold," for the fact that this work is generally less liked is accounted for by the above-mentioned relationship between speech and music. We have little sense for the admirable language of the "Rheingold," or it is declaimed in an incomprehensible manner, and the beauty of this music is so closely connected with the words that by itself it glides on as little understood as a Beethoven quartet. And it is just "Rheingold" which is the most imperfectly performed, for the style of the whole performance, especially of the music, could only be derived from that "living centre of dramatic expression"—i.e. from the verses declaimed by the performers—and is this to be achieved by an Opera-troupe? Now we should remember that in the "Rheingold" the whole foundation of the Wotan-drama is laid, and that everything which occurs up to the end of the "Götterdämmerung" evolves from what here takes place, that the "thought" of Wotan and the terrible soul-struggles of this hero, till he "sees the world

come to its end," have their origin here, and that the music, which again constitutes the connecting thread pervading the entire work, here "establishes the plastic nature-motives, which in their ever more personal development will transform themselves into vehicles for the emotional tendencies of the many-jointed action and also of the characters which find expression therein" (VI, 377). How is the true drama of the "Ring" to be understood if "Rheingold" is either not performed at all or in an incomprehensible fashion? But the fact that it is either left unperformed or given badly is due to the cause afore-mentioned.

It is characteristic for the "Walküre" that the sequence of scenes is very sharply differentiated with regard to the application of the various mediums of expression. It is above all important to realise the importance of the first act in its dramatic relation to the entire work.

Such scenes as the first act of the "Walküre" I should like to compare with the messenger scenes of the Greek drama: to be sure an integral, essential and often eminently beautiful part of the whole, but of secondary im-

portance as regards the true action ; because for Wagner, as for every great poet since Æschylus wrote his "Prometheus," the true action has been the interior struggle of the invisible soul. What the messengers relate is only significant with regard to the impression it produces, and Shakespeare merely represents these episodes on the stage in order to deepen the impression and to put us into immediate contact with the inner life of his heroes. Now Wagner has the immense advantage, not only of showing us the decisive episodes on the stage, but also of connecting them closely with the whole, and more especially with that inner action through the power of music, in a manner which words cannot express. For while the music depicts for us, for example, the love of Siegmund and Sieglinde as only music can do, it nevertheless continues to evoke the figure of Wotan, although he is not once mentioned in the text, and in spite of the fact that not one of the personages concerned is conscious of the link which connects his destiny with the fate of the god. If we but seek to penetrate with sympathy into the poet's intention, we shall perceive that, thanks to this magic power of

music, the soul of the hero is ever present, and that in this way the episode is also quite directly interwoven into the real action of the drama, not merely, as in other cases, by means of a mental process. But the episode is not only interwoven into the action by the fact that the latter transfuses it and surrounds it, in a certain sense, as a vitalising atmosphere, but the episode itself—thanks again to the magic power of music—continues henceforth to live on in the drama. Without our having to recall by abstract means the decisive influence of this or that episode on the inner action, it now continues to live and react, owing to the Tone-language, as an essential factor of the decisive influences whence the entire ensuing action evolves. In actual life it was a decisive factor for all the future ; in the music it now becomes likewise a definite melodic texture. “ By means of these melodic factors we are made the continual confidants of the profoundest secrets of the poetic intention, the immediate participants in its realisation.” Remembrance and premonition now stand bodily before us.

But to return to the “ *Walküre*. ”

If we are not acquainted with "Rheingold," it is possible for us to listen to the entire first act of the "Walküre" without becoming aware that Wotan is standing more than once by Hunding's hearth, or, in fact, of perceiving anything else than a love episode, which in that case will appear to many, and with reason, as a piece of repulsive immorality, which has been idealised by the poet "in a shameless manner." But if the preceding drama is not unknown to us, then we shall at once have the presentiment that what here takes place is the deed of Wotan, and that it is he who would like to delude his own conscience with regard to a sinful transgression. We shall learn it forthwith, and quite unmistakably, in the great scene with Fricka, where the clearest explanations are furnished for our understanding—"du rciztest sic einzig" ("thou alone didst incite them")—and where the whole struggle of Wotan with himself and the impossibility of any satisfactory solution is clearly demonstrated before our eyes. Here in this second scene the Word is consequently very predominant, and, coming as a sharp contrast, it shakes us rudely out of the rapturous intoxica-

tion of the moonlight dialogue ; not only us, but above all Wotan. Wotan aspires to the dominion of the world, and his world-system is to be a "moral" one in the best sense of the word. Every power and every law, however, have their earliest origin in crime ; for true morality (not conventional morality) is nothing else but love, and only he can achieve power who curses love. But, conscious of his lofty purpose, Wotan would like to delude himself with regard to this : "my courage longs for power . . . but love I could not renounce" ; he wishes to overcome this contradiction : "what never yet was, that it is whereon my heart is set!" He would like to persuade himself that Siegmund is a free hero, "devoid of divine protection," and that the love for his sister is not a transgression—

"Was so Schlimmes  
schuf das Paar,  
das liebend einte der Lenz?"<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, he cannot fend off the realisation ; "how did I cunningly seek to deceive myself?" And it is just the tragic love of

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : "What was there so harmful in what these two did, whom spring had united in love?"

Siegmund and Sieglinde which shows how far Wotan's contradictory striving has already led him :

“ in eig'ner Fessel  
fing ich mich :—  
ich unfreiester aller ! ” <sup>1</sup>

The glowing colours of the “ musical ” first act help to emphasise this fact.

Now only we perceive the tragedy of the inner conflict in Wotan's soul ; and after we have had our emotions most profoundly stirred by the first scene, and in the second have seen the desperate insolvability of the problem exhaustively demonstrated for our logical comprehension (by the understanding employing the artistic means of a communication to the emotions), we now reach the first climax of the drama in the big scene with Brünnhilde in which Wotan very gradually descends from the sphere of logical understanding, in which he once more recapitulates his thoughts, to the profoundest depths of his inner being, till he reaches the resolution of

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : “ in my own fetters I was caught :—I, the unfreest of all ! ”

complete renunciation. Here we see how music, which at the beginning of the “unuttered words” of Wotan to Brünnhilde “entwines itself so imperceptibly round the thought-laden elements of speech, that it practically allows the latter to continue by itself,” gradually develops, until it accomplishes its mission as “the most puissant medium of expression,” as revealer of the inexpressible. Whoever fails to see any “action” in this wonderful scene, in which a gradual crescendo monopolises all the human capacities so as to bring about the complete artistic impression which entirely carries us away, being perhaps of the opinion that what precedes and what comes after is much more “dramatic,” because in the one case two human beings embrace and in the other two human beings come to blows—for him the Wagnerian art-work was not created.—The music now remains at this culminating point; for Brünnhilde’s resolve in the scene of the death-message is the counterpart to Wotan’s in the preceding.

It is Wotan’s own will which is now guided, no longer by his thought, but by love: “the

thought which I did not think, but merely felt":

" Wie mein eig'ner Rat  
nur das Eine mir riet—  
zu lieben was du geliebt "<sup>1</sup>

Only music was able to express this change in the innermost soul.

In the third act we have, to begin with, another episode; once more the depicting of a deed which is being consummated through the will of Wotan: his daughters, the Valkyries, are bringing heroes to Walhalla—

" dass stark zum Streit  
uns fande der Feind,  
hiess ich euch Helden mir schaffen."<sup>2</sup>

True, he had in the meantime already uttered the cry:

" Eines nur will ich noch,  
das Ende . . .  
das Ende!"<sup>3</sup>

Here, however, his will still continues to act, and we witness the actual consummation of his "thought" with our own eyes. The music

<sup>1</sup> Lit.: "Just as mine own counsel only advised me one thing—to love what you had loved."

<sup>2</sup> Lit.: "that the enemy might find us strong for the fray, I bade you bring me heroes."

<sup>3</sup> Lit.: "Only one thing I still desire, the End . . . the End!"

continues to co-operate in conjunction with the eye,—but what a different sort of music compared with that of the second act ! The spoken words in this case practically cease to exist and the music is thus only able to depict a very general mood. The difference is about the same as when the visual sense in one case contemplates a landscape, and then in another looks deep into the eyes of a human being.

The last great scene, in which Wotan and his second *ego* stand confronting each other, is built up of an intoxicating intermingling of Word and Tone, which appear in the most varied relationship ; hence the great difficulty of this scene, which at first appeared incomprehensible even to a man like Liszt ; but hence also its overpowering effect. In a letter to Liszt, Wagner observes that " in order to render it comprehensible, it is necessary to have a conscious, most delicate and perfect rendering in every sense." For here Word and Tone form so literally a unique and inseparable whole, that even though the intensity of these two factors of expression varies very much in itself and in the relation of these factors to one another, either one, nevertheless, completely

blends with the other. The thought, as soon as it is uttered, is entirely resolved in feeling, and the understanding has been rendered so perspicacious by the foregoing, that it finds simple words to express the deepest emotions of the inner being. But it is obvious that such a scene could not occur earlier in this drama ; before thought and emotion were able to blend to such a unity, they had perforce to define each other very clearly.

“ Siegfried ” in the first two acts, is, in one sense, again a great episode, comparable to the first act of the “ Walküre.” The characteristic feature is, however, the way in which the true hero, Wotan, is represented to us in each act merely as an observer—“ I came to behold, not to act.” Thereby the episode is henceforth most intimately connected and interwoven with the real action. But the fact that this whole situation is due to Wotan, that it is his doing, is clearly shown to us in his conversation with Mime, but still more pointedly in his meeting with Alberich, where the conviction is brought home to us in so moving a manner that what here takes place acquires its significance only if we consider it in connection with

Wotan's soul. And only in this way was it possible to depict this episode for us so that it can lead up to the third act, the second climax of the drama, and make this appear justifiable in a dramatic sense. The parallel between the construction of the "*Walküre*" and "*Siegfried*" is quite a strict one. First of all we have the episode ; this leads to a dramatic climax in Wotan's soul ; the same sequence of events, multiplied by Wotan's action, now also leads up to the second climax in Brünnhilde's soul ; out of the conflict of these two results the further action. From this parallel of the poetic conception in the "*Walküre*" and in "*Siegfried*" results almost by itself a parallel in the application of the mediums of expression. But the nature of this very episode is so different in "*Siegfried*," and, above all, the closer interweaving with the Wotan-drama exercises such a powerful influence, that Word, Tone and vision do none the less appear in a different conjunction. This second episode is not lyric, but epic ; consequently a bigger rôle falls to the eye. Furthermore, the accumulated poetic store has now been enriched by the entire "*Walküre*," and consequently the

music has a far richer language at its disposal, a language which—if I may so express myself—can appear with more discretion, because it can communicate an infinity of things with a few words. A direct result of this is the infinite grace and charm of the music, which blends without effort with the words and hovers about them as if in play. Wotan's soul, too, keeps a-tune with this; calmly and with lofty merriment he watches the joyful child and the envious dwarfs; also in his case complete harmony is the significant feature.

What he *sees* and what he is, taken all in all, are the same thing, only in a different potency. Consequently we also find complete balance in the expression: Word and Tone blend to a finished whole, in which, however, each strongly and clearly maintains its individuality. I would quote, by way of example: “To whom I love, I give free course.” The transparent clearness in this relationship, the strict measure, the repose, imbue these first acts, as has been said, with something which may well be most clearly expressed by the term “classical.” But with the first tones of the introduction to the third act we are transferred into

another world. Since the true action is the inner one, music will always be its real revealer ; in this case it is without exception the most puissant art. That is why music now breaks forth with fully developed power when Wotan no longer merely beholds, but begins to act, when he solemnly renounces his "thought," his cherished dream and "in rapture cedes to eternal youth," and again when, startled by the passion of his own heart (Brünnhilde), he wishes to bar the way thither for "eternal youth," and when Brünnhilde, ceding to the wild impetuosity of "the love-exulting boy," throws from her her "divine knowledge":

"Götter-Dämm'rung,  
dunkle-herauf !  
Nacht der Vernichtung,  
neble herein !"<sup>1</sup>

These closing words of "Siegfried" accurately designate what is to ensue. "Götter-dämmerung" is a single, immense catastrophe ; it is not an episode in the sense of the first act of the "Walküre" or of the first and second acts of "Siegfried." Wotan's "alter ego," Brünnhilde, is the chief character of the action.

<sup>1</sup> Lit. : "Dusk of Gods, dawn up in darkness ! Night of destruction, descend thy dark vapours !"

But with Wotan's disappearance from the stage, his "thought" has also disappeared; passion alone remained—Love, Hatred, Envy, Revenge—and therefore also the music alone remained. With the exception of the four scenes in which Wotan is represented as "silently awaiting the end," the entire "*Götterdämmerung*" is a symphony which depicts for us the breaking-in of the night of destruction in Wotan's soul. Here the knowledge of an historical fact is absolutely necessary: namely, that, excepting the four Wotan-scenes (the Norns, Waltraute, Alberich and the closing scene), the poem of the "*Götterdämmerung*" has been taken without a single change from the first sketch of the year 1848. Therefore the end of the "*Ring*," as far as the text is concerned, still dates from Wagner's first period of production, whereas all the other parts originate from the period of full consciousness. The musical working out is, however, Wagner's last work but one; it was only begun more than twenty years after the text was written! For a right understanding of the "*Götterdämmerung*," I hold that a realisation of these special circumstances is

essential. Here the unity of Word and Tone, as we have become acquainted with it in "Tristan," the "Meistersinger" and "Parsifal," does not exist—(always excepting the four scenes mentioned, which consequently also stand in strong contrast to the rest)—no, in no sense does it exist. But the fact that Wagner did not compose a new poem suffices as proof that we are right in calling "Götterdämmerung" a titanic symphony. Starting from a diametrically opposed standpoint, Wagner has here arrived at a point similar to that which Beethoven attained in his greatest works. Beethoven's music reached a point where it had of necessity to merge in drama ; Wagner's drama here reaches a point where everything is resolved in music : reason, understanding, vision,—all is here music. That is why Wagner could preserve his old version of the poem. What he once said of Beethoven's "Missa Solemnis" obtains also in this case, namely, that the text is not to be taken in its verbal sense, but that it serves practically as a vehicle for the voice and awakens in us the impression of familiar symbols ; the same holds true with regard to the eye. If the first three

parts of the drama had not gone before, this music would not be possible ; this, I think, is quite obvious. But now when the action has been transferred so entirely to within that the hero no longer even appears on the scene, since this might only disturb the perception of the invisible soul which is incommensurate with any physical appearance, the music is all-powerful. We shall also nowhere else in Wagner meet with such a total emancipation of music. Here we may see to what new conceptions of "absolute music" we can attain through the Word-Tone-Drama : no longer, to be sure, the absolute music of our æstheticians, whose pride it is to assert that music can under no circumstances express anything,—but rather music which, through the drama, has acquired the power of expressing absolutely everything.

As a result of the performances on operatic stages, the "*Ring der Nibelungen*" is an entirely misunderstood work, misunderstood as well in the admiration as in the antagonism it arouses. May the above sketch serve to awake in some of my readers a deeper conception of the great Wotan-drama.

*“Parsifal”*

Of all Wagner's dramas, “Parsifal” is the most easily resumable. At the very beginning the action is summed up in a single phrase: through pity a “Fool” will attain knowledge and consume a deed of salvation. The content of each of the three acts is also herewith designated: in the first act the pity of the “Fool” is aroused, in the second pity leads to knowledge, in the third pitiful knowledge calls forth the redeemer.

It can be asserted of “Parsifal,” even more explicitly than of “Tristan and Isolde,” that the famous epic poem of “Parsival” was a welcome aid to the poet, inasmuch as the universal acquaintance with this version of his hero saved him tedious explanations. Any further connection between the drama and the epic does not exist. That this is indeed the case, is seen from the poetic treatment of the subject and also by the history of the origin of the work.

What at first sight constitutes the difference between the drama of “Parsifal” and the epic, is the fact that the *Holy Grail* is the

central point of the drama,—the Grail and all that is immediately connected with it, that is, the king, tortured in soul and body, and the languishing company of knights. First of all we are shown the sufferings of Amfortas ; then we learn in detail what—or (as Parsifal says) *who*—the Grail is, who are his champions and who his foes, and only when our interest has become entirely centred on the Grail and we ourselves await with deep emotion the arrival of the foretold redeemer, Parsifal appears. Furthermore, in the course of the action we only see the hero at those three moments of his inner life which are decisive for the fate of the Grail. The epic, on the other hand, starts with a detailed account of Parsifal's youth, his adventures and his marriage, and when the hero finally arrives at the Grail-castle, the description of what takes place there and of the king's sufferings is such that we are never able to grasp clearly what it is all about. A nearer description of the Grail only occurs in the fourteen thousandth and seventy-second verse, and there we also merely learn that it is “a stone which must be of noble kind,” and that it is called “*lapis exilis*.” By far the

greater part of Wolfram's poem is then taken up with the knightly adventures which bring Parsifal to Arthur's court and employ the time until he returns to the Grail-castle and by his question: "Uncle, what ails thee?" cures Amfortas. Thus, as a matter of fact, there is hardly any relationship between the two poems, and it is just as well that this be realised at the outset, so that we may not once more be led astray from a clear conception of the Word-Tone-Drama by the spectre of a "dramatisation."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, it should be interesting to note that the poetic conception of "Parsifal" is closely connected with Wagner's other poetic works, and not only, to wit, with "Jesus of Nazareth" and "Die Sieger," but especially with the "Ring" and with "Tristan and Isolde." This realisation is all the more important, as it is often asserted that this work stands quite alone, that in it Wagner went beyond the confines of art, etc.

What there is in common between Parsifal

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Mathilde Wesendonk, dated May 29-30, 1859, Wagner shows how insufficient Wolfram's poem is, "I should therefore have to invent absolutely everything," he writes.

and Jesus the Redeemer, on the one hand, and on the other, between the former and "Ananda the Pure" in "Die Sieger," is quite obvious; but with regard to the dramatic peculiarity of the poem, the relationship with the "Ring" and "Tristan" is more instructive.

The connection between "Parsifal" and "Tristan" consists in the fact that the figure of Parsifal first appeared to the poet very clearly while he was engaged on "Tristan." "Parsifal in his quest for the Grail was to arrive at Kareol, while Tristan is lying there on his death-bed, desperately tortured by the sufferings of love. . . . And it is said that a specific melody of the wandering Parsifal was to have reached the ears of Tristan in his mortal agony, also the mysterious echo-like answer to the latter's life-crushing question touching the 'wherefore' of existence." (Hans von Wolzogen.) Parsifal was therefore originally conceived to serve as a contrast to Tristan, and, in so far, is related to the latter. And what Wagner wrote in 1856 to Liszt: "First of all you would also have to digest my 'Tristan' . . . then only the 'Sieger' would become more clear . . .," goes further to show how

closely this conception of "the holiest, of complete redemption," of renunciation, grew out of the very conception of desire, of death through love. The first sketch for "Parsifal" also ended with the words :

" Gross ist der Zauber des Begehrrens,  
Grösser ist die Kraft des Entsagens."<sup>1</sup>

(H. v. Wolzogen.)

But even here the relationship extends not only to "Tristan," but also to the "Ring." For it was the "love distress" ("Liebesnot") of Siegfried and Brünnhilde which tempted Wagner to interrupt his work on "Siegfried" and to work out this quite similar subject of "Tristan and Isolde" "as a complementary development of the great Nibelungen myth, which embraces in itself a whole world-relation" (VI, 379). And this complementary development now also and inevitably led up to the figure of Parsifal.

"Parsifal" is, in fact, much more closely related to the "Ring" than to "Tristan and Isolde," not so much with regard to the character of the hero, as with regard to the

<sup>1</sup> Lit.: "Great is the magic of desire, but still greater the power of renunciation."

conception of the whole drama. This relationship has its source in Wagner's conception that the Grail was "the ideal representative and successor of the Nibelungen-Treasure" (II, 194). In how far this conception is justifiable, we need not here enquire; it suffices to know that when the poet made his first sketch for the "Ring" in the year 1848, he held and uttered this conception,—namely, that the Grail was the idealised Nibelungen-Treasure. This fact should make one point instantly clear to the reader,—a point which would otherwise require further explanations and even then would appear contorted: that is, that "Parsifal," according to the poet's intention, is an immediate continuation,—or, if you will, a counterpart to the "Ring." These works belong together in the closest and most inseparable sense. Just as there the Gold and the Ring, so here the Grail is the central point; "the striving for the Grail now takes the place of the struggle for the Nibelungen-Treasure." And whereas *Parsifal*, appearing at *Kareol*, would have only shown us the antithesis of renunciation and pity, to desire and death through love, the drama of "Parsifal," taken

as a counterpart to the drama of the "Ring der Nibelungen," shows us one entire conception of the world ("Weltauffassung") as set against another entire conception of the world.

There is little inducement, I feel, to go into the details of what has been here suggested. The important thing is, that the poetic intention be understood, and this in itself is necessary for a better comprehension of both works.

Now the manner in which this dramatic action is exposed for us is highly significant ; it is entirely different from the "Ring" and from "Tristan" and only shows some distant relation to that of the "Meistersinger."

I have already called attention to the manner in which the whole situation is exposed in detail before we even see Parsifal himself. First of all we see the stricken King Amfortas, the despairing company of knights (impersonated by Gurnemanz), the Grail messenger Kundry, and we learn in detail "who" the Grail is, who Titurel, Klingsor and the Flower-maidens are, how the holy spear was lost, to what hope all are still clinging, . . . and only

when we have acquired clear knowledge of all those concerned and of the situation in all its details, Parsifal makes his appearance. And even then he simply "makes an appearance"; in no way does he participate in the action; he has strayed into the Grail domain against his own knowledge and intention, and after the few words which designate him as "Tor" ("Fool"), he becomes a silent spectator. Parsifal, therefore, begins with that "beholding" with which Wotan ended; he ends with the deed. And this relation, which is characteristic for the entire drama, is repeated in each act. In every case a situation is first of all exposed which has arisen and exists entirely without Parsifal's consciousness and participation; without his knowledge and intention fate leads him into it, more or less in a passive state,—and then only, after he has undergone its impression, comes the inner emotion and transformation which leads up to a visible deed.

In the first scene, when Gurnemanz approaches him with the murder of the swan, tears spring up into Parsifal's eyes, he breaks his bow and throws it away;—this is here the

decisive deed. But, as a matter of fact, it is but the visible symptom of the invisible process which is taking place in his innermost being,—in other words, the awakening of pity. And now the boy, in whom the “look” of the swan has for the first time aroused this sensation, is shown very different sufferings—“the brothers in grievous straits” (lit. : “gruesome straits”), the tortures of Amfortas, Titurel’s prayer out of the grave that “he may not die unguided by the redeemer,” and above all the sight of the “orphaned shrine” (lit. : “reliquary”), the centre of the whole drama.

In the second scene we have the dramatic working out of these scenes of which Parsifal has been the silent witness. We have, to be sure, at first another narration : we behold the powers of darkness, how they entice the unsuspecting boy into the magic castle and prepare his downfall ; we also have a visible emotional factor : Kundry’s kiss, and a visible, decisive act : the repulsion of the seducer. The real action, however, is that inner process, through which Parsifal attains knowledge and which is most intimately related to the episodes of the first act. The first shudder of sensual

desire which contracts his innocent heart arouses the memory of Amfortas' wound, and he thinks he feels the wound bleeding within him. This illusion brings him the realisation that it is not the wound, whether his own or that of Amfortas—"should its blood gush forth in torrents?"—but the "sinful desire" in his own heart, in the hearts of all men, and in his heart's agony he now no longer hears the moan of Amfortas, but "the Saviour's cry of anguish"; soon he hears it everywhere; he sees the entire universe in the toils of the "world-delusion's night" ("Weltenwahns Umnachten"), for he himself has come "to know." He sees through his own delusion—and the delusion of all his fellow-beings,—and he recognises as the only object of his life that he must follow "the divine cry of distress, which sounds with terrible force within his own soul and to redeem the Redeemer":

"erlöse, reite mich  
aus schuldbefleckten Händen!"<sup>1</sup>

Pity for Amfortas is, as we see, but a secondary factor. What he still had to learn

<sup>1</sup> Lit.: "Redeem me! save me from hands which sin has stained!"

in order to achieve his work of redemption is taught him unconsciously by those who were planning his destruction, namely, Klingsor and Kundry : that is, who it was who " was able to wound Amfortas with the holy weapon " and in whose hands the spear, which has been eternally sanctified by divine blood, has fallen ; and this spear also they place into his hands. Many have taken objection to Parsifal's not winning the spear in an heroic conflict ; but in so doing, they have overlooked the fact that Parsifal has, unarmed, stormed Klingsor's fasthold, put all his knights to flight, and that his courage has thus already shown itself to be that of a hero, and that without this, he would not have been able to approach the spear. Another point which is ignored by those who make this objection, is the powerful inner action which forms the end of the second act and compared with which every exterior episode, however heroic, would necessarily appear slight and insignificant.

The third act also starts with a description. Since the dramatic action has now been transferred entirely to within, we are only told in this one passage of the " numberless straits,

struggles and combats" which Parsifal had to overcome during his long wanderings. Just as at the close of the first act Parsifal realised the situation from everything which was enacted before him, it is now exposed to him through the sight of Gurnemanz and through his narrative. The impression this calls forth in Parsifal leads to that powerful, inward transformation, whence he emerges as from a last and heavy test, blessed and sanctified, worthy henceforth of the highest office,—as king. The great deed with which the drama closes is the healing of Amfortas' wound and the saving of the Grail from "sin-stained hands." But here again the healing of Amfortas is only the outer sign, the visible event,—the symbol, if you will,—of the inner action. Amfortas is only significant in as far as, quite unconsciously, he exercises a decisive influence on this process of development.

*"Gesegnet sei dein Leiden,  
das Mitleids höchste Kraft  
und reinstes Wissens Macht  
dem zagen Toren gab,"*

says Parsifal to him. However, the Swan, Kundry's kiss and the death of Titurel—all, from the point of view of the drama, served

the same purpose. Compassion with the animal led to compassion with mankind and this to compassion with the Saviour. Henceforth the "divine cry of anguish" influences all his thought, his feelings and his actions; and in listening to this voice, Parsifal climbs up the steep path which leads to entire victory over the world and in his own heart comes to pass—

" Höchsten Heiles Wunder :  
Erlösung dem Erlöser ! " <sup>1</sup>

The entire drama of "Parsifal" merely consists of this development from the Fool to the Saint, i.e. to the Victor ("Sieger").

Herein we also find the justification for the remarkable manner in which the work is constructed, which was referred to at the beginning. In the "Ring" and in "Tristan" the passion and will of the hero constitute from the outset that which gives impulse and direction to the entire drama—to the exterior as much as to the interior action. Thoughts only follow after the deed. But it is only contemplation, that is perception, which can

<sup>1</sup> Lit.: "Sublimest miracle of salvation: Redemption for the Redeemer!"

lead to victory. It is for this reason that Hans Sachs is represented as an eminently contemplative character; again and again he loses himself in the contemplation of his surrounding world, and thereby he is able to see through its delusion ("Wahn") and to conquer his own "Wahn." If then the absolute victory, the evolution of the saint, is to be depicted, it was necessary that the hero should be shown scenes of grandeur by means of which he may cultivate his contemplation and accomplish his perception of the "world-delusion's night" ("Weltenwahns Umnachten"). If he was to be worthy of his high office, it was essential that a leading trait of his character should be an immensely heightened susceptibility. These two considerations control the formation of the entire drama.

If in the "Ring" it was Wotan's "thought," Wotan's dream, which in a sense embraced the whole many-jointed action, so that everything that happened was the offshoot of his will—like the branches of a tree,—here, on the contrary, the exterior action, the picture, entirely envelops the hero. We are shown a great and deeply moving distress, into the

midst of which is brought the unsuspecting Parsifal. And since the leading trait of his spirit is its great impressibility, he does not, despite the noblest emotions which stir within him, rush headlong into delusive actions, but each impression at first so seizes on his soul, that his forces are numbed. Frequently it even occurs that the "exterior man" loses control of his senses, so powerfully the "inner man" is stirred and spell-bound by the sight of what takes place. The result is a double one: on the one hand the absolute forgetting of himself; on the other hand, the penetration of each separate phenomenon till the universal and essential principle, from which it evolved, is perceived. All this is shown to us. Quite at the beginning we are shown how he has even forgotten his name and his mother, and how, as soon as he has remembered them, he straightway again forgets them under the impression of the Grail scene. We understand that later, having lost all thought of self, he will only in his innermost soul follow "the divine cry of anguish" ("Gottesklage"). In the second act we see how the inward concentration of all he experiences leads to the penetration of

each separate event when through Kundry's kiss he "clearly recognises the look" which seduced Amfortas, and when, reremembering the Grail scene, he now no longer hears the moan of Amfortas, but the lamentation of the Saviour.

In order to further a right conception of the dramatic element in "Parsifal," I should now like to call particular attention to the fact that, although the exterior action envelops the hero on all sides and he only participates at the very end by a decisive deed, the true dramatic action from the very beginning is that which takes place within Parsifal himself, and that, in fact, Parsifal is more self-reliant and less dependent on exterior events than those heroes which accomplish or attempt all possible deeds only to perish finally as the "unfreest of all." For owing to the fact that all impressions he receives penetrate into his innermost soul and that his inwardly directed glance perceives everywhere the eternal, the "inner man" in him triumphs not only over the "exterior man," but also over every outer event. In listening to no other voice but that of the "divine complaint," Parsifal rises above

all that surrounds and appears to influence him ; and accordingly it is by divine decree that he is instated as king and henceforth rules over all those who so far had only seen in him a scarcely notable spectator of their own tragic destiny.

Here again the blending of the real drama with the surrounding picture into an organic whole is brought about by the magic power of music. For in the very introduction “ the complaint of loving pity trembles upward out of the shudderings of loneliness : the tremors, the holy anguish of the Mount of Olives, the divine Passion of Golgotha ”—as the poet has himself put it in a programme ; that is divine Passion, and not the sufferings of any particular person, for instance, of Amfortas. Gurnemanz’ big narrative serves as an immediate link between a further development of the musical-thematic construction and the story of the Passion of our Lord. In the Grail scene this is brought about by the mere silent presence of Parsifal, who hears in the complaint of Amfortas the divine lamentation of the Saviour. In this way the picture, that is a separate incident, acquires an eternal significance and at the

same time the exterior episode becomes intimately fused with the inner action.

The fact that this action leads to victory in the soul of the hero, has been the occasion for many obscure and unintelligent assertions ; for herewith is connected the greater part of what has been said about mysticism, religion, misuse of symbols, etc., in connection with "Parsifal." In how far the representation of victory constitutes a dramatic acquisition, due to the Tone-Drama, I have set forth in the discussion on the "Meistersinger." What takes place in Hans Sachs' soul is, however, so delicately suggested, it is so surrounded by a motley, much varied life, that many only give it slight heed, if any at all. Very many spectators see in the "Meistersinger" a merry comedy in which "two couples are matched off" and nothing more. With regard to "Parsifal," however, such-like comfortable conceptions are not possible. Here everything is eliminated which has no immediate bearing on the hero ; the whole power of the Word-Tone-Poet is exclusively concentrated on the depicting of his inner soul-life, and that, moreover, only in the most decisive moments of

his life. Therefore the victory in this case is brought home to us with just as much clearness and power as the downfall in the "Ring." Wotan was striving for power and for love ; both he lost. Parsifal did not curse love, but he withstood its enticements, "the sinful desire," and instead of striving for power, he constituted his entire life in accordance with the bidding of that "complaint of the Saviour," which, as a result of his compassion with another's sufferings, he was able to hear,—and he attained to power and love.

It can be authoritatively asserted that in itself and merely regarded as a work of art, "Parsifal" does not contain more symbolism, more mysticism or more religion than the "Ring." Thirty years before "Parsifal" Wagner had, indeed, written : "The art-work is religion presented in a living form." To be sure ! But that is an entirely different matter. Notice that he says "the art-work" ; that is, the art-work in general, not a special one taken in distinction to another. For Wagner every true art-work is "religion presented in a living form," and—to make use of the first example to hand—not only is the Sixtine

Madonna religion according to his conception, but so is the Venus of Milo's. Assertions such as the foregoing, namely, that "*Parsifal*" is a specifically religious and mystical work, can only militate against a pure, artistic impression, whether they be meant as praise or blame.

We must, however, consider why "*Parsifal*" is regarded as a particularly religious work. This consideration will prove to be illuminating for the only object which the writer has here in mind,—which is, to further a conception of where the drama lies.

This impression is justified : in the first place, by the fact of victory ; secondly, by the forms which art must here apply in order to represent the victory. The true end of practical religion is to achieve victory ; thus every representation of victory will directly serve to recall religion. On deeper consideration, however, we cannot help but perceive that the depicting of a downfall touches as much the mystic and primitive source of all being, that is to say, " that primitive source and only true site of religion in the profoundest and most sacred depth of the individual " (VIII, 32) ; and art

as art—and especially in drama, when it appears as the highest form of art—has as its object to penetrate into that “most sacred depth” and to establish an immediate contact between the “exterior” and the “inner man,” so that the source whence religion springs may flow forth freely and be received with full consciousness by the heart and the understanding, having now acquired a divining power. But whereas now what we generally understand by religion consists in a practical and positive teaching, ordained to help the “inner man” on to victory, art, on the other hand, is perception (“Anschauung”); by means of it we perceive the soul of the universe and become aware of the rushing flow of that source in the most sacred and innermost part of our being. But art can never be anything else but a perceiving (“ein Schauen,” lit.: “beholding”); as soon as it would attempt to teach a doctrine, it would become a communing with the understanding, not with feeling, and in so far would cease to be art. It is therefore a sign of a profound misconception if we regard a work as positively religious because the artist has perceived a victory. Religion

may find itself reflected in the work ; how, indeed, could it be otherwise ?—and the impression made by a performance may arouse in us a religious mood ; but the artist represents victory, because he had perceived it with his artistic vision. Now, however, we come to what would seem incredible, namely, that it is just devout persons who raise their voices in protest against the representation of victory in the drama ! And this protest brings us to the second reason of the entire misconception, referred to above : that is, the artistic means employed to represent victory ; for I take it that these constitute the foundation of the protest.

What I denote here simply as victory, is the victory of the “inner man” over the “exterior man.” When speaking of the “Meistersinger,” I already pointed out that, since it is only music which can reveal the “inner man,” the depicting of victory can also really only be expressed by music. And music has also long ago grasped and achieved this mission, above all in the works of the great “seers,” Bach and Beethoven. In the drama, however, victory could clearly only be represented when music

came to be an integral factor thereof, that is, not until Wagner's Word-Tone-Drama. Now that which essentially differentiates the drama, especially Wagnerian drama, is the fact that it makes its appeal to the entire man, and that in it "the achievements of music become visible." But how shall absolute victory be rendered visible to the eye and conceivable for the understanding otherwise than by an impersonation which must necessarily be reminiscent of religious conceptions? The question here is an essentially different one from depicting a character such as that of Hans Sachs, the sage, for we have here to do with a saint: sensual love conquered by the force of the love of compassion ("Mit-Leiden"; lit.: "suffering with"). The depicting of a soul, which is characterised by oblivion of itself and an inner compulsion of eternally hearkening to the source flowing in its most sacred depths,—"the Saviour's complaint I there do hear"—will always be reminiscent of what is specifically religious, whatever the treatment. Originally Wagner had thought of Buddha. The fact that he chose Christian symbolism appears to me accountable for the following reasons: first,

that he could more exhaustively express his intention in this than in any other symbolism ; secondly, for the consideration which decided his choice with regard to other subjects, namely, the fact that what is generally known requires less demonstration for the understanding and is consequently more compatible with immediate artistic reception. The wish to discover herein a dogmatic teaching can only be put down to inartistic ignorance.

This becomes especially obvious when we remember that in the poet's imagination "*Parsifal*" is intimately related to the "*Ring*." This luminous Grail is for him synonymous with the glittering gold of the Rhine. For innocent beings the latter was also pure and "*a sparkling joy*" which, just like the Grail, "*intermittently wakes and sleeps*" ; it was only the curse on love and the greed for power which endowed it with another significance—just as in "*Parsifal*" also one being had cursed love—i.e. Klingsor—in order to obtain possession of the Grail and thereby to gain power. Therefore in the first place the symbol of the Grail would bear comparison with the symbol of the Rhine-gold, the "*holy spear*,"

which Parsifal brings back, with the branch of the World-Ashtree, "the sacred pledge for treaties," which is shattered in Wotan's hands by the child of his own desire, and then Parsifal himself with Wotan and Siegfried.

But how dangerous for art is the path we have strayed on ! Let us listen to what the thinker says : " Symbols may be often of use in life, but for art their value is unknown ; they should be regarded entirely as hieroglyphics." Symbols, when all is said, are but " a bastard variety of art " and " an allegory is a work of art which signifies something different to that which it represents. Allegory is always intended to represent an idea and consequently also to deflect the spectator's mind from that which is represented and perceptible to something quite different, which is abstract and not perceptible, something quite outside the realm of art . . . the essential significance of a work of art only continues to react so long as we forget its nominal, allegorical meaning " (Schopenhauer). The simple truth is that in " Parsifal " we need not look for any symbols whatsoever, and should we think we had found

any, not search for explanations. For though Parsifal be a Christian, and though he lives in a world which acknowledges the Christian faith, the dogma and the symbolism of the Christian religion are none the less a closed field for art. Art can only come in contact with the deeper-lying foundation in which all religions have their root, whence they spring forth, to be surrounded with dogma and symbolism only when they enter the visible world,—that “most sacred inward part of the individual where the original source of all religion flows,”—or, as the Norn says in the “Götterdämmerung” :

“ im kuhlen Schatten  
 rauscht ein Quell,  
 Weisheit raunend  
 raun sein Gewell’ :  
 —da sang ich heiligen Sinn.” <sup>1</sup>

I should like to take this occasion of calling attention to the fact that Wagner’s art-works, more than any other, run the danger of being distorted by the readings of symbolism, mysticism and similar interpretations. This is a result of the relation of music to the other media of expression.

<sup>1</sup> Lit.: “ in cool shadows murmurs a brook, whispering wisdom flowed its stream :—there sang I sacred runes.”

We have learnt to regard music as the organ of the "inner man," of the inner world. This invisible—and logically speaking—inconceivable element is therefore striving for a form ; the intellectual and sensual man is for his part longing to have the presentiments, intuitions, all the intangible elements of his innermost soul, represented in a tangible form, to have them embodied in a visible picture, in a conceivable connection : herefrom results the art-work. But it is self-evident from this initial fact that we shall find in every work of art the embodiment of something eternal and absolute in something that is transitory and accidental ; consequently every work of art will, in a certain sense, be a parable and an allegory. That, however, does not constitute the importance, but the weakness of the work of art, for its whole purpose is to lead us through what is transitory to that which is eternal. "Art seizes on that part of an idea which can be portrayed, wherein the latter reveals itself exteriorly to the imagination, and raises this idea above itself until it becomes a revelation . by developing the symbol, which before had only been applied allegorically, to a perfect

picture which entirely embraces the idea" (X, 278). But if with Schopenhauer and Wagner we realise that music is fundamentally something different from all the other arts, that is to say, the immediate reflection of the inner world, so that "the other arts speak only of shadows, but it (music) of the being itself" (Schopenhauer), then we shall recognise that in a work of Wagner's there is a great gulf between the nature of what music expresses and what the other arts express, and that the misconceptions from which these works have to suffer is a result of this fact. For here we have together with the symbol also its explanation, by the side of the transitory the eternal, the revelation at the same time as the picture. Wagner writes: "where the other arts say: that signifies, music says: that *is*." And now—in consequence of our distorted and abstract intellectual culture—the inconceivable takes place: since in the Wagnerian art-work our understanding and our senses are held under the spell of a picture and we hear the music simultaneously—"that *is*!"—we apply this voice to the picture, instead of vice versa—perceiving its "sacred meaning" through and

beyond its accidental form, and thereupon draw from the art-work symbols, religions, systems of philosophy, political creeds, and what not !

Many have fallen into this error, especially partisans of the new art-work. But this error must be combated with all possible energy ; such conceptions are the death of all art, for they mistake and deny its very being.

In this connection I think it incumbent on me to mention one other point. According to a very generally accepted notion, not only with regard to "Parsifal," but especially regarding "Tristan" and the "Ring," these works contain a philosophy and embody a particular metaphysical system, namely, that of Schopenhauer.

The preceding might be taken as a sufficient contradiction of this view. But a mere contradiction does not sufficiently further those who are honestly striving to attain real understanding. For this reason I shall ask permission, now that I have reached the end of this chapter, to devote a brief consideration

to this subject, which may serve in a measure as appendix to this fourth part.

### *Art and Philosophy*

There would seem to be some need here of recalling Kant's warning : "It is already a necessary proof of wisdom and insight to know what questions should sensibly be put." For the question : "Do Wagner's works contain philosophy ?" is in itself so non-sensical, that for that very reason, the answer becomes more difficult. We must not, however, shirk the duty of giving an answer.

Many a one feels intuitively that the true artist is allied to the true philosopher. But we can best perceive the nature of this relationship when we turn to actual examples, and for example compare Beethoven with Kant and Wagner with Schopenhauer. The relation between these minds is exactly the same as the relation between the genuine work of art and genuine philosophical perception. They do not contradict each other, but they are beings which are diametrically opposed. They stand in about the same relation to each other as man does to woman ; and a work of art which

should try to present a philosophical perception, would be just as much an abortion as an hermaphrodite.

Now that which connects philosophy and art is essentially the following: namely, that the work of art offers the thinker a transfigured and intense picture of the inner world, and that, in the same way that logic, method, etc., were reared and fostered by the aid of mathematics and natural science, higher philosophy has need of art to attain its deepest perceptions. Schopenhauer's greatness consists in the fact that he realised this. "The work of art," says Schopenhauer, "is, as a matter of fact, striving to show us life and things as they really are, but as they cannot be immediately grasped by everyone through the mist of objective and subjective accidents. This mist is dispelled by art. . . . The high value and importance of art consists in the fact that it accomplishes essentially the same as the visible world itself, only in a more concentrated and perfect manner and with intention and consciousness. . . . All wisdom is contained in the works of the representing arts. . . . Philosophy was for so long attempted in vain, because it was

sought for along the road of science, instead of along the road of art."—Therefore once more: if the sciences offer for philosophic contemplation as clear a picture as possible of the exterior world, art offers it the clarified picture of the inner world, freed from everything accidental. This holds true for all genuine art.

But with Wagner's art the following also must be taken into consideration: (1) It is the most comprehensive art which man has produced so far; (2) it is the purest art; (3) as a result of his exceptional genius, Wagner's works possess an intensive value which it is not easy to estimate. It can therefore be assumed that in Wagner's works (as Schopenhauer says) "all wisdom will be contained"; and it may also be assumed that this wisdom, this profoundest sense of the world, will be revealed to us with hitherto undreamt-of lucidity.

However, to assert that on this account Wagner's works "contain philosophy" is just as absurd as to say that the world contains philosophy, since philosophy exists nowhere else but in the mind of the philosopher. The

world is the world and nothing more, and the fact that the abstract reasoning of a thinker has combined a world-system is no concern of the world's as such ; this function of the thinker is simply one of its phenomena, and it can only be asserted that the world contains philosophy inasmuch as the world contains the being who conceived the philosophy.

The relation of the work of art to philosophy is hereby accurately illustrated. It may be that the work of art will stimulate someone to philosophise ; it may be that it will afford him a glance into the innermost part of the world, clearer and more penetrating than he had ever before obtained,—and his mind may now exercise its normal function on this experience and forge for itself a chain of beautiful ideas. But to suppose that this chain of ideas lay forged and ready to hand in the art-work itself, or that it exists therein in any form whatsoever, that is badly applied modesty. My dear philosopher, this was entirely your own handiwork ! The artist saw only the world, for for him to see is as natural a function as it is for you to think !

But it is extraordinary that just Schopenhauer and Wagner are the special victims of this lack of understanding, since we cannot, thanks to their writings, be for a moment in doubt with regard to their own clear recognition of the true relation between abstraction and consideration.

“Art,” says Wagner, “taking it strictly, ceases to be art the moment it enters as art into our reflecting consciousness.” And Schopenhauer, who from his standpoint as philosopher reveals himself still more clearly to the understanding, writes: “Ideas, however useful for life and however serviceable, necessary and productive for science they may be, are eternally sterile for art. On the other hand, the idea which has been gathered up (in the Platonic sense) is the true and only source of every true work of art.—But ideas are essentially fit objects for the contemplation, and thus, strictly speaking, inexhaustible. The communication therefore of something which is thus inexhaustible can only be brought about by means of perception, which are also those of art.—The mere idea, however, is entirely definable,—to wish to communicate a thing of

this sort by means of a work of art, is a very superfluous detour, nay more, it belongs to that playing with the means of art without knowledge of their purpose which we have just condemned.—Now when in contemplating a work we clearly perceive the cold, limited, sober idea shimmering through the rich means of art and finally standing forth, we experience nothing but disgust and aversion. . . . For this reason it is as futile a proceeding as it is undignified if, as frequently occurs nowadays, we attempt to trace back a poem of Shakespeare's or Goethe's to an abstract truth, which it was their object to communicate to us . . . ; only that thought which was *perceived* before it was thought has, when communicated (in the work of art), power to stimulate and thereby becomes immortal . . . ” etc.

I might continue to make pages of quotations, for the conviction that art represents “something which is perceptible and therefore inexhaustible” is one the communication of which Schopenhauer had particularly at heart.

But as I do not wish to close with a negative,

but with a positive result, I shall once more repeat what it is that connects art and philosophy; it is twofold.

They are related by the object—i.e. the world—on which their activities are concentrated. And since philosophy tends to become more and more abstract and the highest form of art divests itself ever more of all that is accidental,—music especially being only concerned with the pure origin of all being,—these two, art and philosophy, rise out of the mists of what is accidental and transitory and attain a lofty region where they stand face to face and look deep into each other's eyes. But it is still impossible for them to blend together: on the contrary, the more reason has become clarified through abstraction, the further removed is it from contemplative perception, and the more art succeeds in throwing off all that is accidental and conventional, the more must it renounce the co-operation of reason and become pure perception. Thus the more clearly art and philosophy stand forth as that which they really are, the more do they appear to us as elements diametrically opposed in human nature, but all the better will they be able to

understand each other. Now that art has been freed from the co-operation of reason, it will also perceive much more clearly the nature of reason, and what it perceives, it will depict ; and Schopenhauer shows us to what acute and exhaustive logical insight into the nature of art philosophy can attain.

So much for one point of contact. The other one is that which has been previously repeatedly referred to, namely, that true art contains all wisdom, since it is a clarified and concentrated counterfeit of the world itself. The highest works of art must be regarded as nothing short of revelations. That can be clearly perceived : first, from the fact that their creator could never have called them forth by means of abstraction and combination ; secondly, because in them our glance can without any effort take in the most distant relationships, and sudden connections, of which before we had no intimation whatever, become revealed to us. Hence it follows that the philosopher can draw wisdom from works of art. But the work of art does not on this account "contain" the ideas which the thinker has abstracted from it, but what it

does contain is something which we may perhaps describe as a revelation of divine wisdom ; or rather, it does not "contain" this wisdom, but it *is* it. It is this wisdom which speaks to us out of Wagner's works.

Herewith we have ended our consideration of Wagner's art-works of the second period. My entire striving has been to induce the reader to recognise a dramatic poem in each of the works and to persuade him that they can only be understood and appreciated from this point of view. We have seen that in order to do so it is above all and everything essential to arrive at an exact and exhaustive understanding of *the part which music plays in the drama*, for by the co-operation of music, as the most important factor of dramatic expression, the conception of "action" has become radically changed. Moreover, the condition under which speech and scenic representation co-operate for the realisation of the drama have become different owing to their intimate organic fusion with music, and for the very same reason music also appears

in an ever-varying form and under different vital conditions than in other musical works.

My considerations, therefore, bore principally on two realisations, which, however, emerge from one point and converge again in the same point, for which I had to point out everywhere the true action; it was necessary for me to show that this could only be represented in and through music; and when (as in "*Tristan*" and the "*Ring*") I examined the details, we found the proof that wherever music attains to its fullest development, it is in obedience to a dramatic compulsion.

The first characteristic feature of the new drama is, therefore, the co-operation of music. The action must be born out of the spirit of music, that is engendered by the "*inner man*," not subject to formation and conventionality; with every other action the co-operation of music would be an arbitrary ornament. But here, on the contrary, the co-operation of music, which reveals the invisible, inner life, becomes a dramatic necessity, the music only participating in the realisation of the stage

action in the manner and degree rendered necessary by the drama.

The second characteristic feature of the new drama is the manner in which it draws the entire being to participate in the vitalisation of the action. Although it be true that it was ever the purpose of the higher forms of all poetic art to penetrate into the invisible inner world and by the sympathetic awakening of the two parts of our secret nature to bridge over for a moment the chasm which lies between them, so that what is individual and accidental may appear to have the significance of a universal truth and necessity,—by the immediate participation of music in the representation of the action an essentially different rôle is allotted to the remaining mediums of dramatic expression than in other dramas. For whereas the immediate arousing of the inner being had formerly to be attempted by indirect and circuitous means—i.e. through the words and the eye, this is now brought about without an effort and with unfailing certainty by means of music. However, the co-operation of word and eye in the drama is thereby by no means rendered less important or in any way detracted

from,—quite the contrary. When the situation calls for it, the Word can assert itself with a concentrated precision which would be inconceivable without the co-operation of music, and it can, on the other hand and just as in real life, resolve itself into an ecstatic broken utterance. The eye for its part plays a rôle hitherto undreamt-of, as well with regard to the entire scenic picture as also with regard to the music. For no longer as in opera is a moonlight night, a sunrise, a popular feast, an excuse for agreeable music, but the dramatic meaning of these scenes, that is, their influence on the souls of the participants in the action, is revealed to us by the music which entwines its linking bond round the entire action, and thereby those scenes themselves derive an immediate and often very great dramatic significance. And almost exactly the same holds true of the pantomime, that is to say, the movements and gestures of the actors ; they all attain through music an immediate significance with regard to the drama, and a long scene, for example, can be enacted without a word being uttered, which the gestures can render poignantly moving.

It may therefore no longer appear a paradox when we assert that in Wagner's works neither the music, the text, the scenery nor the gestures can be understood, if they are not all taken from the point of view of the dramatic action.

But it will also be recognised that Wagner has not only bequeathed works to us, but a new dramatic form, which contains in it endless possibilities, in which "there will be eternal scope for new invention," and outside of which it is no longer possible to create drama in its highest form. When and where a so mighty genius as Richard Wagner will again appear to the world, the Divine Decree can alone ordain ; but one thing is certain : until his idea has fallen on to fruitful soil, that is to say, until artists and public have learnt to live and work in this idea—everyone according to the measure of his talent—Wagner's works also will never be able really to live. For mere admiration can achieve little, and the imitation of exterior means less than nothing. The idea, the idea of the new drama !—this we must re-conceive, must perceive actually and clearly ; as long as we fail to do this, we cannot possess

it, nor can we possess the works which have their life therein.

To stimulate this re-creating acquirement of the living idea, from which issued Wagner's art-works, was the object of the present essay.

THE END

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

## THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A TRANSLATION FROM THE GERMAN  
BY JOHN LEES. WITH AN INTRODUC-  
TION BY LORD REDESDALE. DEMY 8vo.  
2 VOLs. SECOND EDITION. 25s. NET.

### PRESS OPINIONS

“This is unquestionably one of the rare books that really matter. His judgments of men and things are deeply and indisputably sincere, and are based on immense reading. . . . But even many well-informed people . . . will be grateful to Lord Redesdale for the biographical details which he gives them in the valuable and illuminating introduction contributed by him to this English translation.”

*Times.*

“It is a rich book, in which one may delve to good purpose. . . . it is a remarkable book. It is a monument of erudition, and the skilful handling of erudition.”

*Spectator.*

“The book and its author are remarkable in every way. . . . Mr. Chamberlain can write as well as think. . . . Ideas are the breath of his life. Lord Redesdale in a singularly interesting, illuminating and sympathetic introduction . . . fills fifty printed pages, and they certainly are not too many.”—*Saturday Review.*

---

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD, W.  
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY

# THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

## PRESS OPINIONS—(continued)

“A man who can write such a really beautiful and solemn appreciation of true Christianity, of true acceptance of Christ's teachings and personality, as Mr. Chamberlain has done, . . . represents an influence to be reckoned with and seriously to be taken into account.”

THEODORE ROOSEVELT in the  
*Outlook of New York.*

“It is a masterpiece of really scientific history. It does not make confusion, it clears it away. He is a great generalizer of thought, as distinguished from the crowd of our mere specialists. It is certain to stir up thought. Whoever has not read it will be rather out of it in political and sociological discussions for some time to come.”

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW in the  
*Fabian News.*

“It is recognized, according to Lord Redesdale in his Introduction, as ‘one of the masterpieces of the century.’ . . . All will admire his courage and ingenuity and the rich sincerity with which he adorns his learning, and makes his book an exceedingly attractive work of historical art.”

*Manchester Guardian.*

“I gladly chronicle my admiration for this notable achievement, and, while differing very strongly from the main thesis and anti-semitic argument, both of which too often I find supported by special pleading and questionable ethnology, yet acclaim the writer's immense erudition and eagle sweep of wing. Chamberlain is a very great genius, and his heart beats on the side of the angels.”

EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

LONDON : JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD, W.  
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

# IMMANUEL KANT

A STUDY AND A COMPARISON WITH  
GOETHE, LEONARDO DA VINCI, BRUNO,  
PLATO AND DESCARTES. AUTHORISED  
TRANSLATION FROM THE GERMAN  
BY LORD REDESDALE, G.C.V.O., K.C.B.  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE  
TRANSLATOR. IN TWO VOLUMES WITH  
EIGHT PORTRAITS. DEMY 8vo. 25s. NET.

## PRESS OPINIONS

“This most interesting work, brilliant and eloquent in quite unusual measure, inspiring a profound respect both for the range and mastery of the writer's knowledge, is therefore the production of an amateur in the best sense of the term; the philosophic Eros claims his own here. These qualities make it a work of real genius in illuminating exposition, one with which it would be difficult to find another example for comparison.”—*Outlook*.

“Mr. Chamberlain in this profound and profoundly interesting book, has illustrated Kant not only by the light of other great thinkers, but also with all his own wide, deep and varied learning.”—*Truth*.

“Mr. Stewart Chamberlain may be said to have made his literary reputation by that significant book, ‘The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century.’ He has assuredly widened it by these two volumes, which place the personality as well as the creative work in philosophy of ‘Immanuel Kant’ before us. It has . . . been left to Lord Redesdale to translate this remarkable book, and it is not too much to say that he has accomplished a difficult task with a happy union of fidelity and charm.”—*Standard*.

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD, W.  
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY

# IMMANUEL KANT

## PRESS OPINIONS—(*continued*)

"In the way of serious literature this is indubitably the book of the year, and although as yet the year has run but half its course it is likely to remain so. It is a performance which will add even to the prestige in intellectual circles of the author of that truly monumental work, 'The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century,' which, it is not too much to prophesy, will set the name of Houston Stewart Chamberlain side by side with that of Gibbon in the estimation of posterity.

"When one contemplates the huge and ever growing mass of critical biography which loads the shelves of our great libraries, one must confess that to have discovered an entirely new method of setting in relief the virtues and defects, the qualities generally, of a given personality is in itself a feat of no mean order. And that Mr. Chamberlain has done. . . . It must suffice to say that Mr. Chamberlain's 'Immanuel Kant' is an indispensable addition to the library of every student who desires to keep abreast of the current of modern philosophic thought."—*Sunday Times*.

"No one . . . who reads Mr. Chamberlain's amazingly full and masterly volumes will be in much doubt as to the justice of the pre-eminently high claim he makes for Kant, while, under such persuasive and illuminating guidance, one must wonder at the manner in which the philosopher has suffered at the hands of those who professed to admire him and even to call him master. . . . As a guide and aid to the study of Kant these volumes of Mr. Chamberlain's must henceforth be indispensable. . . . Of Lord Redesdale's translation it is at least such that the book reads as if it had been written originally in English instead of German, and by a master of that language. In works of philosophy such performances are as rare as they are welcome. It is a duty to be exact, but it is a very rare thing to be also lucid and preserve the fire of the original."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

---

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD, W.  
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY



